

Don't Quit

When things go wrong,
As they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit—
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.

Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a fellow turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out.
Don't give up though the pace seems slow—
You may succeed with another blow.

Often the goal is nearer than
It seems to a faint and faltering man;
Often the struggler has given up
When he might have captured the victor's cup;
And he learned too late when the night came down
How close he was to the golden crown.

Success is failure turned inside out—
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems afar;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit
It's when things seem worst that you mustn't quit.



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*"MY CUP
RUNNETH
OVER..."*



*a meditation on the
Twenty-third Psalm*

"MY CUP RUNNETH OVER . . ."

● It is supposed to have been a custom among shepherds of Israel to dash a cup of water upon the head of any sheep going into the fold at night which, perchance, had neglected to drink during the day. The shepherd would render this refreshing ministry to the poor, thirsty, tired, and dusty sheep as it passed under his rod when he counted them at night.

"My cup runneth over," spiritually, speaks of ministry to others. Christianity is not a mere intellectual assent to doctrines (important as sound doctrine may be in these apostate times), but is doctrine in action.

There are a great number of self-centered souls who seem to be as stagnant as the Pool of Siloam, and it would almost take an angel from heaven to come and stir them up to do something for others. Many people sit once a week at the Lord's table to break bread who are merely "bread breakers," sometimes heart breakers when you think of how little their cups run over either in praise to God or translated into the good works of serving others. Then, there are others who cannot get out on a prayer meeting night even to pray for others. Their empty chairs on such occasions are realistic pictures of their empty hearts.

"My cup runneth over." Are you running over? Have you run over to see some sick neighbor lately? When did you run over to that hospital or jail or take some of your surplus cheer and blessing to someone else? Or is the handle broken on your cup—your soul—so that the Master cannot get hold of it to dip it into the

ocean of His love and then pour out in blessing to others? Paul said in Philippians 2:17, "Yea, and if I be offered [poured out] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all."

"My cup runneth over." Haven't you anything over, over that of your own needs, for someone else? When the Lord fed the multitudes there were baskets left over, seven on one occasion and twelve on another.

When my cup runs over, there is oil and wine to pour into someone else's wounds.

When my cup runs over, there is some missionary afar off remembered faithfully and practically.

When my cup runs over, I invest my time, talent, energies, and stewardship in things really worthwhile instead of squandering them on petty larceny, things that will be only wood, hay, and stubble at the judgment seat of Christ.

When Christ sat down on the Throne of Grace in heaven, the Holy Spirit overflowed at Pentecost; and brother, sister, if Christ gets the throne place in our affections there will be a spiritual overflow of blessings that will benefit those with whom we come in contact. May He have that place and reign there without a rival.

The widow's two mites were a gift from an overflowing cup.

The widow's pot of oil was a cup running over, blessing the whole household.

Ruth's ephah of barley was a cup running over, from which she ministered to Naomi.

The Twenty-third Psalm, translated into many languages, has been a cup running over to bless the people of the earth and has ministered blessings untold to souls both old and young.

Paul and Silas in the jail at Philippi were cups overflowing with prayer and praise. The prisoners heard

them; but the jailer heard them and believed them, he and his household. Those two cups have not run dry in all these centuries, because they have been replenished by the grace of the Spirit of God.

It would seem as if Christ Himself were an empty cup at Calvary when He cried, "I thirst," but oh, no! He was and is the overflowing Cup of Salvation, the Fountain of Life where thousands upon thousands have drunk to live. Even a look at His empty tomb filled the hearts of His disciples, whose faith seemed dissipated in fear, doubts, and unbelief, for when they looked into that empty tomb their hearts were immediately filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, their cups began to overflow, and they began to tell each other and the world, "He is risen." Of course it is written, "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord!" A risen Lord and an empty tomb did it.

Am I a cup overflowing, or am I piled up in the kitchen sink with a lot of other dirty dishes waiting to be washed and made fit for the Master's use?

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (II Timothy 2:20, 21).

—WILLIAM T. MCLEAN



1J15 For helpful Christian literature, please write to the address below.

Good News Publishers / a nonprofit corporation
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"Do Not Weep"

Sometimes you have to look back at where you've been, before you can see where you're going.

This is one of Victoria's Profound Observations. And I quote it now because this is what we are doing this morning. Our scripture invites us to look back in this season of Pentecost; invites us look back at where we've been as disciples and as the Church, so that we can see where we are going.

Every individual, every group, every institution, needs to look back to its beginnings. They need to consider and claim those forces of personality which did their initial shaping. They need to recognize the events which brought them to birth. They need to appropriate that power which enlivened them and which is still available to them. Unless there is a continual replenishing, from the roots, so to speak, the individual or group or institution will wither and die.

This back-to-beginnings is especially necessary when a person or group comes to a time of decision and action, or when they come to a time of business-as-usual. The season of Pentecost is both. It is the time when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit and the formation of the early Church, and in this time we claim that spirit and formation for our own. It is also the season of the "long haul" in the Church year, that time from May and all the way to the end of November, and it mirrors our "long haul" between the first Pentecost and the final coming of God's sovereign rule to the world.

So it's fitting this morning that we go back into the ministry of Jesus, back to a story that will help us remember the kind of person Jesus was, and what he did, and the kind of power that was made available to us, through him.

It's an odd, theatrical little story that Luke tells. It is story that he wants the Church to remember:

Jesus and disciples and a great crowd are approaching the entrance to the city of Nain. As they come near to the gate of the city, there is another crowd coming out. This crowd is a funeral procession. The bier with the body of a young man comes first, carried by bearers on their shoulders. Next comes the mother of the man. She has lost her husband, and now she has lost her only son. No wonder she weeps. The musicians play, and the professional mourners beat their breasts and wail and tear their clothes, and the large crowd shuffles and talks and cries behind them. The two crowds come together, with Jesus at the front of one, and the woman and her dead son at the front of the other. But instead of by-passing one another, they meet. Jesus speaks to the woman -- a strange saying in the circumstances. "Do not weep", he says. And then Jesus speaks to the dead man. And the dead man sits up on his bier and begins to talk. Jesus gives the living son back to his mother. Both crowds are filled with awe, and everyone begins to praise God. Jesus is hailed a great prophet, one who speaks for God. What he does is seen as proof that the very presence of God is with the people. And the crowds are so excited that the whole countryside hears what has happened. It is an odd, theatrical little story, a story that Luke wants the Church to remember.

It might be a story that some of us might like to forget. Because this is a story about raising the dead. These are the stories which are often the hardest to consider as we look back to our beginnings in hopes of replenishment or guidance. Did Jesus really raise the young man from death?

Whether we think he did or did not, the people in the early Church thought that it made sense to talk about Jesus as though he did. But it doesn't always make sense to us. As I've said before in another sermon, in many ways we prefer what is dead to stay dead, and buried. Failing that, we are used to pills and shots, and intensive care machines and hospitals -- but only up to a point. As for this being an example of behavior to follow, a lot of us have trouble raising ourselves out of bed in the morning, much less thinking we can raise life from death. Jesus raises the dead. What can this story mean for us in our lives and in our time?

I would suggest that there are three clues in the story which point to ways in which this Jesus, this action, and this power apply to our present situation, both as individuals and as the Church.

The first is the clue of compassion. It is Jesus' compassion which moves him to become involved with the woman and the funeral. Compassion is much more than feeling sorry for someone. Instead, to feel compassion means that one feels at one with another person in their grief or trouble or joy. One identifies oneself with that person so that one is moved to join in, to help. It's important to note that here Jesus' compassion is not primarily for the dead man. His compassion is for the woman, who has lost not only two loved ones, but her only means of protection and economic support in society with the death of her son. He raises the dead to raise the dead, but even more Jesus raises the dead to help the living.

So the second clue is the clue of direct action. This is a story about a lot of people -- two great crowds, a woman, a young man, a funeral group, Jesus, and the disciples. But Jesus is the one who meets the situation with direct involvement. He goes himself to the bier and touches it. He speaks to the woman and the young man. He involves himself and his faith and his willingness to help directly, personally, and effectively.

That is why the third is the clue of recognition. Because the young man was raised from the dead and restored to his mother, the crowds recognize Jesus as a great prophet, like the famous Elijah. But even more, this resurrection is seen as a sign that God's presence has come among them. After all, it is one thing to say to someone, "Do not weep". It is something else to say "Do not weep", and then to fix things so that the weeper can indeed stop weeping. The joy and new life which were brought about by Jesus' compassion and direct action are recognized as signs of God's action and presence in the events and emotions of the people.

These three, then, are the clues, in this story from our beginnings, which can help to point us in the direction we will go in the future. They can help to point us to the kind of people we will be, the actions we will take, and the power which is available to us. Given these clues, if we as the Church are to be like Jesus, and do what he did, and use the power he had, then this story does apply to our situation now. We also are to raise the dead, both in actuality and in symbol.

For there are many kinds of death in our world, and physical death is not always the worst of them. The deaths which result from hunger, oppression, loneliness, chronic disease, lack of education, hostility,...these are often far more painful. They are often more drawn-out. They often kill the soul as well as the body. They often kill others as well as the dying. If like Jesus, we have in the Holy Spirit the power to raise a dead body -- that seemingly final, irrevocable reality -- well, then, these other kinds of death can also be changed, changed from death into life and rejoicing.

But how does it come about? And how are we part of it? (Remember how hard it is for some of us even to get ourselves up and around.) Again, our three clues: compassion, direct involvement, and recognition. As individuals, as a congregation, and as a Church, we have wonderful opportunities to bring all three into play.

The other day I was at an ecumenical clergy gathering, and the denominational jokes were coming thick and fast. The rabbi said that where you have two Jews, you have three opinions. The Catholic priest said that where you have two Catholics, you have a bingo game. The Baptist preacher said that where you have two Baptists, you'll have the First and Second Baptist Church. And I, the United Methodist, said the most typical thing I could say, that where you have two United Methodists you'll have a committee.

Now I'm not much on committees as such, in fact, I would often tend to agree with the paraphrase of John 3:16 that states "for God so loved the world that God did not send a committee." Nevertheless, they are a part of our United Methodist "method" for getting things done, and they often work quite well. Consider what we are about today and for the rest of the week.

A little later in this service, this congregation will send forth a number of people to Annual Conference. These people will attend business sessions, worship services, and meetings. They will pray, think, and vote on a wide range of issues and resolutions. Some of these resolutions have been copied and are available for your prayers and consideration on the table at the back of the sanctuary. From this Annual Conference, another group of people will be elected to go to General Conference in 1984. (Now there's a date to conjure with!) This group will attend meetings, pray, think, and vote. And then for the next four years, great numbers of people will be set to work. Enormous amounts of money will start to move. And all over the world, the spectres of death -- death by ignorance, disease, oppression, and hostility will be beaten back, and hope and life will begin to grow where they have never been. It's really amazing how much gets accomplished. It's really amazing how immediate it can become.

A resolution in support of the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches may not seem like much, until we realize that many of us watch "60 Minutes" and read Reader's Digest, and, it is to be hoped, put our offering in the plate.

A resolution on Micronesia may seem very far away from our concerns, unless you were at the last United Methodist Women's meeting, where Bob Fishel -- who spent ten years in the South Pacific -- helped us realize that these people are our brothers and sisters indeed, and that we affect each other in our living and our way of life.

A resolution in support of planning in order to reduce economic dependence on military spending may seem pretty abstract, until we realize that we all know people, ourselves included, who are caught in the terrible dilemma of praying for peace while paying for war.

Resolutions on alternatives to capital punishment and on alternatives to incarceration may seem unnecessary, until we realize how many of the folks we know have been the victims of crime, and that we pass the Charles Street jail to get to church and other places, and that so many of the people with whom we have contact here have these things as realities in their lives.

It's really amazing how much gets accomplished. It's really amazing how immediate it can become.

But it all begins with individual people who feel that compassion, who feel that identification and desire to help and join in, who directly involve themselves in doing something about it.

We may not, all of us, raise the physically dead. Different abilities are given to different people. But we can all feel compassion. We can all take some kind of direct action. As the pace of life slows -- somewhat -- during the summer, and as we consider our direction as a congregation, this story from our past invites us to consider the many opportunities we have in our present and our future.

The opportunities for compassion are endless: the physically dead and their mourners, yes; and those who are dying from oppression, poverty, hunger, emotional pain, loneliness, and lack of power.

The opportunities for direct action are endless as well: to raise the physically dead, yes: and also to pray a prayer, write a letter, cast a ballot, make a phone call, sign a check, invite someone for dinner or coffee, drop in for a visit, research a problem, make a speech, throw a party -- and yes, join a committee.

All it takes is the desire, and the action. If we feel the desire and take the action, then by the power of the Holy Spirit the dead will be raised. Then we can say with confidence, "Do not weep", because there will be no reason to cry. And then the people will give thanks to God, for they will know that God, and that we ourselves, are with them.

Amen.

Victoria Anne Gaskell
Old West Church
Boston



THEE PAPER

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Vol. 2 No. 6

Deborah E. Jeter, Editor



Boston Univer
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

745 Commonwealth Avenue, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

INFORMATION FROM THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE

Earl R. Beane

The following statistics are for the
September, 1981 entering class:

- 97 Students matriculated
- 21 States represented
- 19 Denominations represented
- 7 Foreign countries represented
- 9% Minority students
- 12 Special students
- 58 M.Div. Students
 - 66% Male
 - 34% Female
 - 9% Minority
 - 40% Married
 - 66% United Methodist
- 7 M.T.S. Students
 - 71% Female
 - 29% Male
 - 29% Married
- 4 S.T.M. Students
- 1 M.S.M. Student
- 3 D.Min. in Sequence Students
- 17 D.Min. in Ministry Students
- 7 Th.D. Students

Geographical Distribution for total entering class:

- 44% New England
- 16% Midwest
- 13% West
- 11% Middle Atlantic
- 6% South
- 9% International

As we look to the future, prospective students will be visiting the School of Theology throughout the year. In fact, already some of you have met those who have been here in September or October. During these Fall weeks, I (Earl), or

ADMISSIONS OFFICE (Cont.)

Carole Bowman, are visiting colleges in Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana.

On February 10, the School of Theology will hold a prospective student conference for Black students. This will be held in cooperation with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Program event on that date here at the school.

During Spring break, a prospective student conference will be held in the Washington, D. C. -Baltimore area. This is being planned to coincide with one of the Seminary Singer Concerts.

Toward the end of March (specific date yet to be determined) we will host a prospective student conference at the School of Theology. In the past this event has been held in November some years, in January other years. This year we will try Spring. I am sure there is no perfect time for this event.

LECTURE AND DISCUSSION

All STH-TY and GRS students are invited to meet with Jim Ewing, the Executive Director of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors here at STH on November 5, 1981. The lecture and discussion will focus on the theme "The Future of Pastoral Counseling" and will be held in room B-19 beginning at 3:30 pm.

PLOWSHARES

Steve Harvester
Peace Intern '81-82

Readers with long memories will recall that the first two columns of Plowshares this semester were stories. I enjoy writing stories but, receiving no response concerning them, I switched to more conventional prose.

Since that switch several persons have asked me "what happened to the stories? I enjoyed them so much!" So, I will tell you another story. But you must tell me if you like it or not, for I won't tell another if you don't!

THE FACE ON THE MOUNTAIN

There once were three brothers who lived in a twice-blessed village in the Urals. The first blessing was the face on the mountain. The second blessing was the poustinik.

The face on the mountain jutted out over the village, high above. It seemed to be a wise face, with deep and craggy lines. It faced west, and when the setting sun shone full upon it, the villagers were sure they could see a smile.

There was a legend that one day a man would appear in the village whose face would be that of the face on the mountain. That man would be the third and last blessing for the village: the sign of the Kingdom of God.

The poustinik was a holy woman who lived on the side of the mountain. A poustinik is one who lives in a poustinia, or "desert." It is a small cabin far away, where one goes to seek God. The poustinik tended her garden and spent her days with the Bible and in prayer. But if anyone should come to her, the door was never barred.

PLOWSHARES (CONT.)

One day the three brothers decided to climb the mountain the poustinia. They were dissatisfied with their lives, and sought a holy word to set them a happier road.

The first brother was Simple. He was fat, and worked for the village as street cleaner. That was an important job in a town with so many horses.

The second brother was Brave. He was built like an oak tree, and killed wolves. The third brother was Clever. He was thin and worked for a lawyer. All three were bored.

It took half the day to reach the poustinia. When they arrived they knocked on the door and opened it, for there was no latch. The poustinik was always at home to welcome anyone who came.

The brothers entered and bowed to the cross, the icon of Our Lady, and to the poustinik.

"Peace be to this house," said the brothers.

"Peace be to you," said the poustinik. "Please share this bread and tea that God has sent me." And so they did.

The poustinik listened to the stories. She listened so hard that Clever nervous, for his dealings in the law office had not all been quite honest, and the poustinik's dark eyes seemed to see through him and six feet under him. But if she knew any secrets she kept them.

"I will not preach to you," said the poustinik. "I will give you practical advice. Take the prayer ropes. Count one thousand knots each day. With each knot say these words: 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.' Your prayers will be answered, and you will know what to do."

PLOWSHARES (CONT.)

His face was deeply wrinkled, his lips downturned. How could they not be? His lips had spoken so many judgements, fortune for these and ruin for those. They were not the lips of the face on the mountain.

At last the parade was over. The last troop of cavalry had passed in review. It was a long hard job for Simple to get the village clean again. But he worked steadily, and with a will.

It was a beautiful spring evening, and the sun was setting in full majesty upon the still warm earth. Simple paused from his work to gaze up the mountain slope to the poustinia where he knew his friend lay dying.

He looked further up yet, where the full glory of the day lit up the mountain's face with a light that seemed to issue from within as well as out. Simple smiled to see such beauty. There was no one there to notice that his face and the mountain's face were one and the same.

NEXT
LIBRARY WORKSHOP

will be on

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 3rd 1981

3 - 4 p.m.
in the Library

SUBJECT: "Research topics"
will cover whatever is of
interest to the students
who attend.

Sign-up sheet in the library
at the circulation desk.

TO ALL STH ARTISTS

If you like to draw and would like to share your talent, I'd like to talk with you about reproducing your drawings or cartoons in THEE PAPER. Any size which may easily be accommodated on these pages is acceptable. Originals will be returned. Please contact me (Box 51) or give me a call (353-6967) if you are interested.

Deb Jeter, Editor

ELECTION RESULTS

These five people were elected to open seats on the BUTSA Council.

James Cotter, M. Div.
Mark Fowler, M. Div.
Timothy Overton, M. Div.
Robert Phillips, M. T.S.
Ginger Webb, M.T.S.

Three other people are appointed to the Council by the Standing Committees and three people are appointed by the same committees to the Judicial Board.

Congratulations and good luck!!!

WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE MEETING

Wednesday, November 18
Place and time; TBA

PEACE WITH JUSTICE FORUM

THE REFUSAL--an award-winning documentary film about Austrian Franz Jaegerstatter, a conscientious objector who was executed by the Nazis.

Wednesday, November 28
5:00-6:30PM
Hartman Lounge
Free

PLOWSHARES (CONT.)

This was advice the brothers could understand. They almost ran down the mountain with their prayer ropes, and immediately set to work.

Brother Brave had been praying for two days when his answer came to him. "I must use my bravery for a nobler cause than killing wolves. I will go to St. Petersburg and join the cavalry!" He gave his prayer rope to the village priest and left the next day.

Brother Clever had been praying for five days when his answer came to him. "I must use my cleverness for a nobler cause than fleecing simpletons. I will go to St. Petersburg and join the government!" He gave his prayer rope to the village priest and left the next day.

Brother Simple prayed for two, five, seven, and fourteen days. But still no answer came to him. At last he made the hard climb back to the poustinia.

"No answer has come," said Simple.

"Count three thousand knots each day. And never lose faith," said the poustinik. And these things Simple did.

Time went by. Brave was very brave indeed, and rose through the ranks to be general. The tsar himself put a medal on his chest. He repelled invaders, and was called "Savior of the People."

Time went by. Clever was very clever indeed, and rose through the ranks to be prime minister. He staved off famine and brought wealth to all. He was called "Hope of the Nation."

Time went by. Simple was very simple indeed, and stayed in the village as street cleaner. He had three, five, countless thou-

PLOWSHARES (CONT.)

sands of prayers each day, but no answer came to him.

But something else did come to him. About three months had passed when Simple felt a pain in his heart, then a most delightful warmth. Other feelings came: sometimes his heart would feel as if it were bubbling with joy like a mountain stream. Sometimes it would feel light and strong as eagle's wings, so he would have to run about the fields. Sometimes it would burn with love, and sometimes it would open up like a clear glass, and he would understand deeply what he could not comprehend before. His prayer went on by itself, without urging. His love overflowed to all around him.

Time went by. Simple visited the poustinik almost every week. But still it was a surprise to him when she said. "Simple, I will die soon. Will you be the poustinik after me?" It was only after many prayers that Simple said no. There were still a lot of horses in the village that needed cleaning up after. And the poustinik said that was good.

One day the word got out that the brothers Brave and Clever would return to their village for Easter. The people were very excited, because they were sure the legend would come true at last. Surely one of these brothers would resemble the face on the mountain, and the village would be thrice-blessed at last. Of course their brother was the happiest of all.

There was a magnificent parade, with soldiers marching and bands playing and children strewing flowers. Brother Brave led the procession; his face stern and fixed. How could it not be? His eyes had followed so many into death. They were not the eyes of the face on the mountain.

Brother Clever was resplendent in medals and silks. Sixty flags were carried before him.

Praise Be to God, the Almighty

5

Ps. 103

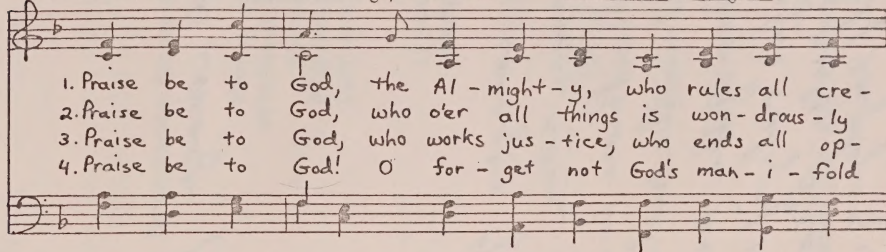
Joachim Neander, 1680

Tr. Catherine Winkworth and others

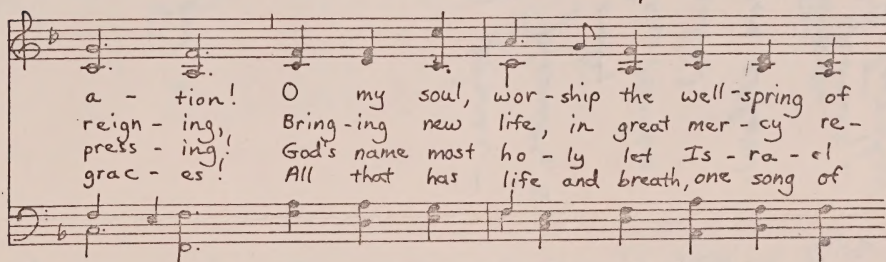
New words, Ruth Duck, 1980. Used by permission.

LOBE DEN HERREN 14.14.4.7.8.

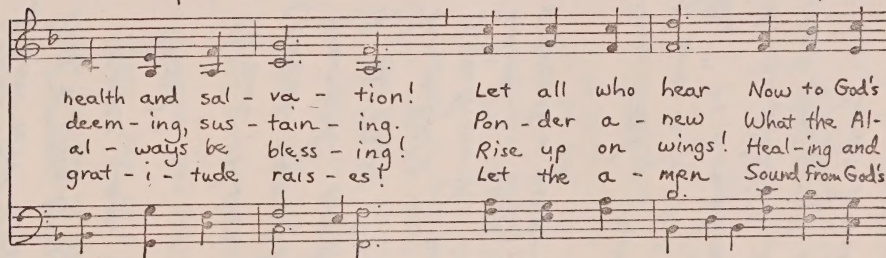
Stralsund Gesangbuch, 1665



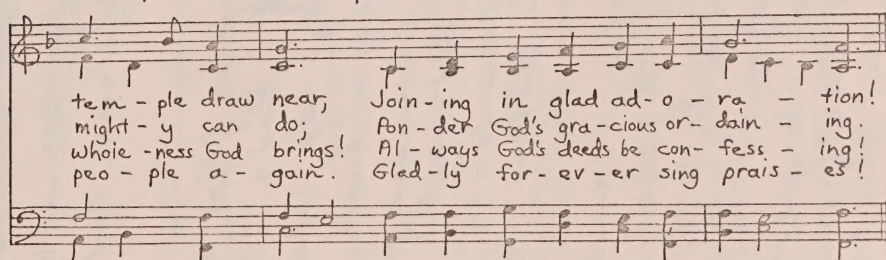
1. Praise be to God, the Al-might-y, who rules all cre-
 2. Praise be to God, who o'er all things is won-draus-ly
 3. Praise be to God, who works jus-tice, who ends all op-
 4. Praise be to God! O for-get not God's man-i-fold



a-tion! O my soul, wor-ship the well-spring of
 reign-ing, Bring-ing new life, in great mer-cy re-
 press-ing: God's name most ho-ly let Is-ra-el
 grac-es! All that has life and breath, one song of



health and sal-va-tion! Let all who hear Now to God's
 deem-ing, sus-tain-ing. Pon-der a-new What the Al-
 al-ways be bless-ing! Rise up on wings! Heal-ing and
 grat-i-tude rais-es! Let the a-men Sound from God's



tem-ple draw near, Join-ing in glad ad-o-ra-tion!
 might-y can do; Pon-der God's gra-cious or-dain-ing.
 whole-ness God brings! Al-ways God's deeds be con-fess-ing!
 peo-ple a-gain. Glad-ly for-ev-er sing prais-es!

The musical setting and certain adaptations of the words are from LUTHERAN BOOK OF WORSHIP,
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 and copyright holders.

I. likeness of God
Ancient Israel + Canaan God
Cherubim - power.

Our image of God + authority.

II Servanthood

III Contrast = God image for
ancient world.

IV Meaning for us.

Need to rethink images of power -
power to not power over. Jesus's
"power of the weak". Power is only
"permissible power" - the ruler rules
only by permission of the ruled.
God rules - X rules only if we allow.
But what kind of rule - strong,
judgmental or self-emptying, giving.
We need to rethink our relationships
w/ God and recognize that God

God
Vindicate + have comp. on servants
power is gone, none remaining, bond
or free

Where are then Gods, the rock of
their refuge.

I am God. none beside me. I
kill + make alive, wound + heal,
none can deliver out of my
hand.

Christ, tho' in form of God, did not
count equality w/ God a thing to be
grasped, emptied self, taking form
of servant, born in human likeness.
humbled self - became obed. to
death on X. God exalted + bestowed
name - every knee bow in heaven
+ earth - tongue confess JC Lord.

Can only rule - X can only rule
if we are able to permit. Was
the "triumphal entry" that ar was
it a street demonstration by the
weak/powerless, who recognized in
J. one who had overthrown his own
need for power and they could relate
to that. Can we? Can we believe in
a God whose power is in our hands.
Kare Zuber's is a sub

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF PROVIDENCE
134 Mathewson Street Providence, Rhode Island
Rev. Marge Ragona, Pastor (401) 272-9247

First Sunday After Christmas
December 31, 1978

Singspiration Announcements Meditation
Introit: Joy to the World #22

CALL TO WORSHIP:

L: Go out! Go out! Prepare the roadway for my people to return. Build the roads, pull out the boulders, raise the standard of Israel!

P: See, the Lord has sent messengers to every land and said Tell my people, I, the Lord your God, am coming to save you and will bring you many gifts."

L: And you shall be called "The Holy People" and "The Lord's redeemed."

P: Our city shall be called 'The Land of Desire' and "The City God Has Blessed."

HYMN: One Day #13

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25, Galatians 4:1-7

Sermon: The Frog Prince Rev. Marge Ragona

Hymn: Just As I Am #119

The Prayers of the People
Response: Hear Our Prayers

Worship with Our Tithes and Offerings
Doxology

Communion Hymn: Let All Mortal Flesh Keep
Silence #15

Prayer of Confession:

O God, our days go by as a dream and the seasons run swiftly on and are gone; we do not turn to thee, nor hear thy Word, nor look for thee in the night watches. We walk in the mazes of our own vanity. Often we listen to foolishness and pride ourselves on our wisdom. In the dark of our own closed lives, we look with blind eyes and avoid your Light. O holy, high, and mighty Lord, break us loose from our folly. Capture us by grace and hold us in mercy, lest we continue to let the years go by empty, drab, and lost. Make us truly grateful for the mystery of days that are renewed again and again. Help us to arise every morning, glad that each second is filled with your everlasting goodness. Th rough Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying "Our Creator, who art in heaven..."

The Lord's Supper

The Sung Thanksgiving

Now our God is with us, let us make thanksgiving
For the joy within us living.

In this holy temple, at this holy table
Hope and life God will enable.

Now we leave and believe, that Gdd will restore us
For the work before us.

Closing Hymn: Angels We Have Heard on High #29

Benediction/Passing of the Peace

* * * * *
Welcome to Metropolitan Community Church of Providence.
We are one of 120 MCC's in cities throughout the
United States, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand,
South Africa and Nigeria. We welcome into fellow-
ship all people regardless of their previous church
alliance, sex, race, sexual preference; We believe
that there is one faith, one Lord, one baptism — and
that we are all the children of one God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The pastor's family wishes to thank all those who made our Christmas full and exciting. Those who contributed to the Pastor's Christmas Fund are especially thanked -- as well as those who joined us for dinner. We hope everyone had a happy Christmas and were blessed by their families, as we were blessed by this church family.

Tuesday, January 2: Helpline Meeting at 55 Eddy Street. Anyone who would like to sign up for the Helpline is invited to attend this meeting and the training sessions. (7:30 p.m.)

Thursday, January 4: Bible Study, 7:30 p.m. Read I Corinthians in preparation. Exhorters will have a take-home exam on Paul's ministry.

Tuesday, January 9, 7:30 p.m.: First session of the new Rap Group -- topic "Homosexual, Bisexual or What?" Everyone is welcome. Wine and Cheese following the rap.

Sunday, January 14th: Rev. Dr. Paul Gillespie will be our guest preacher. Dr. Gillespie is the Executive Minister of the Rhode Island Council of Churches. Everyone is invited to come and bring a friend.

Wednesday, January 17th, 7:30, 55 Eddy Street: Rhode Island Coalition of Gay Organizations will meet.

Wednesday, January 24th, 7:30 p.m., 134 Mathewson Street: Movie: "The Boys in the Band." Tell your friends and let's all turn up for this fun movie.

Board members will meet immediately after service to set a date for the January Board Meeting.

Exhorters: Meeting on Saturday, January 6th. Please bring your proposed school schedule for the next term. Topic: The Eucharist. (Deacon candidates are also invited.)

We wish to thank Mr. Frank Murphy for accompanying
our singing this evening.

OUR CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Rev. Marge Ragana

Exhorters: Connie di Cenzo
Phil Eberle
Barbara Kendall
Belle Pellegrino

Exhorter
candidate: Pat Appleby

Deacon Candidates:
Cynthia Dumont
Mary Vitarelli

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Vice Moderator: Stephanie Judd
Clerk Mary Comerford
Treasurer Bill Counts
Members Ernest Bourgeois
William Mencer

* * * * *
Parsonage: 5 Junction Street, Providence, R.I.

THE GATE OF THE YEAR

This is going to be a strange sermon, because it started out to be about a watchman, but he wasn't important. It was a messenger who turned out to be what it was all about. Then an old fairy tale (for all you old fairies, I guess) got into it, and finally a message from two kings. And there's going to be an altar call -- that's in retaliation for the Gregorian chanting of the Magnificat the other night. Most of you understand what an altar call is -- but for our Anglican brothers and sisters, let me explain an old Baptist custom. After the sermon, there's an invitation to come forward and respond to the sermon. You don't have to, but if the Holy Spirit is dealing with you, it's kind of nice to have a way of answering -- and that's what an altar call is all about. You just come forward and we'll have a word of prayer with you -- the exhorters are up in the front of the church and will be there to act as counselors if any of you feel that you want to respond.

New Year's is a strange time of year. We tend to feel a little like Janus, the Roman God of the Year who stands looking back into the past and forward into the future with his two faces. I've been looking back into the past -- thinking about where I was 10 years ago this month, and realizing how many things had happened to me. Ten years ago, I was still living with my husband, had a 10 month old baby, and was a typical Baptist housewife (albeit with a somewhat shady past) I remembered Robert Frost's poem

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I
I took the road less traveled by
And that has made all the difference.

And it has. This has been the most amazing, rewarding ten years of my life. I went back to college, taught school for nearly eight of

those years, left my husband, lived with a lover for seven years, finally left New Orleans where I had lived for 12 years, and found myself on the road which will eventually, I hope, lead to the ministry. I have never looked back with regret once.

I was thinking this as I sat down to plan this service and thought about what I wanted to say to you and how I wanted to say it. One of the things I wanted to get across was the idea of JOY -- the unspeakable joy -- not happiness, because no one can promise that -- but the JOY of being a Christian and the sense of peace and release from bondage that comes when Jesus comes into our lives. So that's where I want to begin. We have met the Christmas season with great solemnity and my Fundamentalist soul cries out to have the joy of my salvation restored!!

My text is from Isaiah, and the students from my Wednesday class will recognize it as being from the Deutero-Isaiah. Isaiah is a strange book of the Bible, because the first half was written over a hundred years before the second half and the first half refers to the Assyrian captivity and the second half to the Babylonian captivity. As prophecy it has three layers of meaning. One for the children of Israel, one for the time of Christ's birth, and yet another for us. The children of Israel were in the Babylonian captivity for nearly one hundred years, then Cyrus the Persian became emperor of the whole Middle East -- having the first really huge empire. But where the Assyrians and Babylonians tried to destroy and erase the national identities of captive nations, Cyrus was much more enlightened. He had promised to return the people to Zion, to rebuild the land, and to help them restore the temple at Jerusalem. The Deutero-Isaiah had reason to be exuberant. He shouts for joy, welcoming the messengers who bring tidings back to Jerusalem that the captives will be returning, that

peace will return to the land, they are saved. The messenger tells them that Jahweh has won out and reigns over the world. The watchmen on the city gates shout for joy as they see the people of Zion returning to the destroyed nation. Out of their worst disaster the children of Israel and Judah have again become blessed by God, there is a second exodus and with it a return to the God of the parents, God has released them and comforted them.

Now that would have been enough for God to do -- but God doesn't just work in one period of history and forget those of us who come after. God had another message in this piece of scripture for us. This same passage speaks also of Jesus. At this Christmas season when we are all aware of the coming of Jesus, let's look at that passage as prophecy concerning Jesus. The messengers are the Angels beautiful over the hills of Gallilee, telling the shepherds watching of the coming of the king who would have his people Israel. The shepherds were spellbound as they were told the good tidings of great joy -- they didn't know then but it was to be good tidings of the joy of their salvation. They and the whole world had been, were being, are being redeemed.

And the same message has an immediacy for us today. How beautiful to know that Jesus comes to us, that we, too, are released from captivity to sin, freed from bondage to our old selves, saved from separation from God eternally -- freed to the Zion of God's company forever. How beautiful to know that Christ is born again in our hearts, that God reigns within us, and because God dwells within, we are comforted, strengthened, secure. We are held, redeemed, secure.

~~With the coming of Jesus~~, you got two presents last week, you got Jesus and you got salvation. They're both yours for the asking. O.K. -- you know who Jesus is, but what's salvation? Well, it's another word for God's love, and let me see if I can tell you how it works. (Here's where the old Fairy Tale comes in.)

You all know the story of the Toad Prince (or maybe in your story he's a frog) but you probably haven't heard it for 30 years, right This came to me the other night when Ro Rasmussen was doing a bit with a frog puppet at the children's party, so you'll have Ro to thank if this works.

Once upon a time there was a princess (no, honey, not a queen!) and she was out in her garden, when she saw an ugly old toad at her feet. The toad said "ridic" and the princess picked him up. He said, "Honey, underneath this warty exterior beats the heart of a nobleman. If you'll love me, I'll turn into a handsome young prince -- or princess if that's what your taste would prefer (no problems with sexual orientation there). Well, she looked at him and it was her turn to say 'ridic'. No way was she going to love a toad. But she did become fond of him. Every morning he'd be there, going "Ridic" and she got so she expected to see him. One morning when she went out the toad was being mauled by a goose and about to be killed. She ran over and drove off the goose, picked the toad up and impetuously kissed it. Lo and behold, Instant Prince! End of story. What has that to do with salvation?

You and I are the toad. Don't tell me you never felt like a toad. I do all the time. Ugly, warty, miserable. Sitting there all of a dull brown heap. God's the princess. God czn't love that horrible ugly little toad -- or can he. That's the miracle. God does. Satan's the goose -- giving us a real going over and about to win

when God steps in and by the miracle of love saves us. And the interesting thing is that we are transformed. We are made new creatures -- Paul calls it becoming a "new man" -- but you can become a new woman, too. Remember that the transformation wasn't anything the toad did -- it was the princess' love that changed him. Just the same way, salvation isn't anything we do, God's love changes us.

Now, do you remember the rich young ruler's question "What must I do to be saved? At some point all Christian's have to come to grips with Jesus, and we ask that question? The answer is so simple and yet so puzzling that theologians have spent hundreds of years and written thousands of books to explain. You don't have to do anything -- Jesus just told the rich young ruler to sell everything, because he knew he wouldn't do it -- he knew that the young ruler really didn't want to follow him. All you have to do is believe. Believe that Jesus was born, died on the cross, and that he carried your sins away. Whatever you were -- toad -- is gone and you're transformed. It's that simple.

Now for the message from the king: The Christmas that I was 10 England was at war with Germany, the ~~v~~ery beginning of W.W.II. Trans-continental radio was still something of a novelty (that long ago?) and one of the exciting things we did (we didn't have too many choices in a poor preacher's family) was to listen to the Christmas messages from around the world. I still remember part of the young king's message to his beleaguered empire, a message of hope when it looked like his kingdom was about to be taken captive:

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
"Give me a light that I might tread safely into the
unknown." And he replied, "Go out into the darkness
and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be
to you better than a light and safer than a known way."

Many years later I looked up the poem (by an almost unknown woman -
Minnie Haskins) and was impressed by the next lines -- seldom quoted:

So I went forth and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the
night. And he led me toward the hills and the breaking of
day in the ~~xxx~~ lone east."

The New Year is starting in a few days. Do you have the joy of
salvation in your heart. Do you want it? Would you, could you step
out on faith saying to yourself "God loves me just as I am. God
accepts me, just as I am. Jesus was born in me and for me. All I
have to do is stretch out my hand, take God's hand and let him lead
me.

Are you ready to take that step. Will you accept Jesus redemption
for yourself? Will you allow God to give you Jesus now? We're
going to sing "Just as I am". If you've never trusted Jesus to save
you, God to protect and comfort you, do so now. If you've gotten
away and Christ is not the center of your life, let him be now. If
you need to have the joy of your salvation restored, put yourself
in a right relationship with God now. Come to the altar with your
needs, your trust, your old self -- and go away transformed with your
faith lifted. Come now as we sing. You're not promising this church
anything -- you're making only a private commitment to God. You're
saying "I do trust you, God." Come expecting to find comfort for your
life, forgiveness, for your sins, redemption for your soul. Come and
let the toad in you be transformed.

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year
"Give me a light that I might tread safely into the
unknown." And he replied, "Go with the light
and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be
to you better than a light and safer than a known way."

Many years later I looked up the poem. It is almost unknown now.
Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and was interested by the poet's lines -- "Alfred, Lord Tennyson"
So I went forth and finding the land of God, that night I
night. And he led me through the hills and the breaking of
day in the same land.

The new year is starting in a few days. Do you have the joy of
salvation in your heart? Do you want it? Would you could you just
out on faith saying to yourself "God loves me just as I am. God
accepts me just as I am. Jesus was born for me and for me. All I
have to do is stretch out my hand, take God's hand and let him lead

me.
Are you ready to take that step? With your heart? Do you want it?
for yourself? "Will you allow God to give you what you need?
joy to find "Just as I am." If you've never trusted Jesus to save
you, God is waiting and waiting for you. He is now. If you've never

said that Christ is now the center of your life, let him be now. If
you need to have the joy of your salvation restored, get yourself
in a right relationship with God now. Come to the altar with your
needs, your trust, your old self -- and be very transformed with your
faith lifted. Come now as we sing. You're not pretending this is

anything -- you're making only a private commitment to God. Your
saying "I do trust you, God." Your expecting to find comfort for your
life, forgiveness, for your sins, redemption for your soul. Come and
let the God in you be transformed.

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH
OF NEW YORK

P. O. Box 1757, General Post Office
7th Avenue at 13th Street

New York, N.Y. 10001
(212) 691-7428

ORDER OF WORSHIP
December 28, 1975
First Sunday After Christmas

Prelude:

Walter Janes

Introit: "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

*CALL TO WORSHIP:

Leader: We come to this service with so many needs and longings.
We've been many different places, conceived many different thoughts.

People: But underneath all our differences is the same basic need for love and acceptance.

Leader: That is why we are here -- to admit to each other and to God our need for love.

People: And to celebrate the most marvelous fact of the universe -- God loves us and accepts us just as we are, and to prove that love sent us Jesus.

*HYMN No. 172 "Joy To the World" (Meth. 392)

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS -- RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Meditation

Marcia Geyer

Reading from the Scriptures - Isaiah 52: 7-10

*GLORIA: Glory be to the Lord God, And to the Christ
And to the Holy Ghost
As it was in the beginning, Is now and ever shall be
World without end. Amen. Amen.

*HYMN No. 193 "One Day" (See Page 3 for words)

SERMON: "The Gate of the Year"

Exhorter Marge Ragona

Altar Call - Invitation Hymn No. 232 "Just As I Am" (Meth.119)

COMMUNITY PRAYER - ending with the Lord's Prayer

Our Lord in Heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Do not bring us to the test, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

WORSHIP THROUGH OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS:

Offertory:

Doxology: Praise God from whom all blessings flow. "Watchman, Tell us
Praise Jesus Christ and in him grow. of the Night"
Praise to the Holy Spirit give. John Devers
That we in love with God may live. Amen

HYMN No. 176 "There's A Song in the Air" (Meth. 380)

COMMUNITY
OF NEW YORK
20th Avenue at 17th Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
(212) 691-1234
ORDER OF WORSHIP
December 25, 1972
First Sunday After Christmas
Prelude, No. 1
Instruments, No. 1
Hymn, No. 1
Gospel, No. 1
Epistle, No. 1
Prayer, No. 1
Benediction, No. 1
Communion, No. 1
Postlude, No. 1

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE:

Sometimes we feel hopeless and afraid, God. Does anyone really care about us? Do our lives make any difference when we look at the whole universe. Sometimes, too, the fact of our own impending death sinks into us and we're scared. Is there eternal life? Is there is, what's it like? Why can't we trust you that everything will be all right no matter what? And yet all the nagging doubts about death and life are still there. Forgive us for our doubts and fears, God. We know that often they make us treat others cruelly. Forgive us for all the evil we have done others in the name of our own anxieties. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

One fact remains unchanging -- God has loved you, is loving you and will always love you. It's so hard to believe that it must be said over and over; God accepts and loves us just as we are. Our lives are given back to us with love. We are freed to live fully in the present. That is the Good News of the gospel.

CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

PRAYER OF ACCESS AND CONSECRATION: Anthem: Silent Night, Holy Night
THE BREAKING OF BREAD/THE BLESSING OF WINE
THE INVITATION AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

* Alleluia... Let Us Praise God ... Thank you, Jesus...

BENEDICTION

*HYMN: Blessed be the tie that binds/Our hearts in Christian love,
The fellowship of kindred minds/Is like to that above. Amen.

Postlude:

Walter Janes

* * * * *

WELCOME TO METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH: We are happy to have you worship with us. Know that you are welcome today and every day. If you are interested in membership in MCC, or in learning further about the Fellowship, speak to a member of the ministerial staff or stop by the hospitality table during the coffee hour. Visitors cards will be made available during the announcement period. We encourage you to fill one out and place it in the offering plate.

MINISTERIAL STAFF: Rev. Gilbert Lincoln, Pastor-Designate; Rev. Jay Neely, Staff Minister; Deacons: Warren Smith, Lupe Martinez, Gene Netherland; Exhorters: Jim Beers, Jerry Cunningham, Teddy Doohan, Dee Jackson, Marge Ragona, Bill Smith; Music Director: Lloyd Moore; Organist: Walter Janes.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Chuck David, Marcia Geyer, Brandy Glick, Jim Jarman, Tony Gonzalez, Eric Neilsen, Constance Peck, Chet Snow.

MEMBERS OF THE MINISTERIAL STAFF are available for counseling. Speak to one of them at the coffee hour, or call the church office for an appointment.

Our thanks to all those who helped with the Christmas Dinner. We served over 60 people. Over 100 people attended church Christmas Eve. Eight children came to our first children's Christmas party. We feel richly blessed by everyone's participation in our Christmas programs.

Attendance Last Week: 153
Offering Last Sunday: \$419.34
Needed for Budget: \$462.68

SUNDAY ACTIVITIES:

2:00 p.m. Prison Ministry
Rikers Island
5:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal
Sanctuary
5:45 p.m. Adult Bible Class
Russell Chapel

* * * * *

NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY at West Side Discussion Group, 9th Avenue and 14th Street begins at 10:00 p.m. Tickets are available from the Deacons for \$7.50 (church receives \$2.50 for each ticket sold) and price includes music, free beer or sangria, soft drinks, and midnight free champagne. If you BYOB there are free set-ups. Dress is optional, but appropriate. (WS)

WOMEN'S PARTY on Tuesday, December 30th, at 7:30 p.m. All women are invited to bring cheese or cake to share, and come have fun with us. Bring records if you are so inclined. (LM, MR)

LESBIAN MOTHER'S RAP GROUP wants to thank all the people who contributed to the children's happiness. To the men who gave gifts, to Juan Diaz and Jim Jarman who contributed for refreshments, to "Ro" Rasmussen for the puppet show, and to all the women who gave gifts, served, cleaned up and helped, "God bless you, everyone." (MR)

PRISON MINISTRY IS GROWING AND NEEDS PENPALS. See Jay Neely for names of people to write and visit. (J)

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM IS GROWING AND EXPANDING. Marge Ragona has taken responsibility for the Sunday Teaching Hour at 5:45, Gloria Lawlor will be teaching our 9-12 girls, Jim Jarman will be teaching boys 9-12. There is a place for studying the word for all of us. Come and learn. (MR)

LIKE TO ACT OR WORK BACKSTAGE? Manhattan Lambda Productions will be holding open casting for "Arsenic and Old Lace" Monday and Tuesday, December 29th and 30th at 8:30 p.m., 145 West 18th Street, New York, NY. (EN)

ZION FAMILIES are being reactivated. If you would like to become a member of a Zion family, please see Lupe Martinez, John Devers or Gene Netherland. Any member, friend, or person in the congregation may become a family member. There are no restrictions and endless possibilities. (LM)

THE NEW YORK BLOOD PROGRAM is still looking for donors for the emergency situation that exists between the end of December and January. Realize that your pint of blood covers you and your spouse (lover, mate, etc.) for one year should either of you need blood. (CP-DJ)

NEW JERSEY PARISH EXTENSION is still in operation despite losing their church building space. See Teddy Doohan for location of services. (BG)

ALBANY PARISH EXTENSION is also well underway, with Bill Smith leading services there every other week. Bill reports 6-10 in service each Sunday.

OUR VERY BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY AND BLESSED NEW YEAR TO ALL OF YOU!!

MIDWEEK ACTIVITIES: 12/29- 1-4-75
Tuesday: Women's Christmas/New Year's
Party: Russell Chapel
Wednesday: New Year's Eve Service
Russell Chapel
Friday: Bowling League
Bowlmor Lanes, 110 Univ.
Place

[illegible]

Frog Prince

This is going to be a strange sermon,
because it started out to be about a
watchman, but he wasn't important
it was a messenger who turned out
to be what it was all about - then an
old fairy tale got into it - and finally
a

7th June

This is going to be a strange summer.
Because it started out to be about as
normal, but the weather is important
it was a message with things and
to be what it was in about - then on
and going into it - and finally

①

At the New Year of 1966 - ten years ago, I found myself facing a decision. "Coming out" is one of the hard decisions we all make. I was "coming out" for the second time - the first when I was 15. But I had gone back in, married, had children - and now I was having to face coming out again. ~~at this time~~ ^{I was 36} This time it was not so easy. It meant leaving my husband, supporting 3 children - one of them a 10 month old baby - alone. ~~It meant lying to my family.~~ ~~It meant~~ covering up to my co-workers at the University and living a lie at the church where I was ~~and lying to my family.~~ Sunday School superintendent, I remembered the words of Robert Frost's poem

"Two roads diverged in a wood
And I, I took the road less traveled by
And that has made all the difference."

And it has. This has been the most rewarding, most amazing ten years

of my life. I went back to college,
^{taught school for 7 years}
~~became a teacher~~, left New Orleans
where I had lived for 12 years,
and found myself on the road
that will lead - eventually - I hope -
to my becoming a minister. I
have never looked back with
regret once.

The solemn anticipation
of the Christmas season
as we've experienced it
this year.

I was thinking as I sat down
to ~~write~~ plan this service about
what I wanted to say to you and
how I wanted to do it. One of the
things I knew I wanted to do was
to try to get across to all of you
the unspeakable joy - not just
happiness, because I can't promise
you that - but the joy of being a
Christian, and second the sense of
peace and release from bondage
that comes when Jesus comes into
our lives. So that's where I
want to begin:

My text is from Isaiah 52: 7-10
Let me read it again to you.

We are made new - princes - in God's sight. No longer the ugly toads, but totally transformed. Paul calls it becoming "a new man" - and of putting away the old.

Remember that the transformation wasn't anything the toad did - it was ^{the prince's} ~~God's~~ love that changed him.

O.K. Remember the rich young ruler's question "What must I do to be saved?". At some point all Christians have to come to grips = Jesus and we ask that question. The answer is so simple and yet so puzzling that theologians have spent hundreds of years and written thousands of books to explain. You don't have to do anything. You just have to believe - believe that Jesus was born, died on the cross, and that he bore your sins away and that whatever you've done, whatever you were - TOAD - is gone and you're transformed. It's that simple. Will you go out of here tonight transformed?

yourself? Will you allow God to give you Jesus, now? We're going to sing "Just as I am." If you've never trusted Jesus to save you, God to protect and comfort you, do so now. If you've gotten away and Christ is not the center of your life, let him be now. If you need to have the joy of your ~~past~~ salvation restored, put yourself in a right relationship with God now." Come to the altar with your needs, with your trust, Come now as we sing. It seems strange, but you're making no promises to anyone but God - no commitment to anyone but Jesus. You're saying only "I trust. I have laid out my hand to God." Come expecting to find comfort for your life, forgiveness for your sins, redemption for your soul."

a relatively unknown woman, Minnie
Haskins from a poem called "God Knows".
What impressed me most is Haskins
next line, seldom quoted:

So I went forth & finding the
~~hand~~^{hand} of God, trod gladly into the
night. And he led me toward the
hills and the breaking of day in
the lone east.

The new year is starting in a few
days. Do you have the joy of your
salvation in your heart? Do you
want it? Would you - could
you - step out on faith saying ~~to~~^{to}
yourself "God loves me just as I
am." "God accept me, just as I am."
Jesus was born for me & in me.
All I have to do is stretch out
my hand & take God's hand and
God will lead me."

Are you ready to take that step?
Will you accept Jesus' redemption for

the Christmas when I was ten.

I remember ~~the 1939~~, when ~~my brothers~~
~~and~~ ^{commercial} Transcontinental radio was still
relatively new and one of the exciting
things we did was to listen to Christmas
messages from around the world. Early
Christmas morning as we sat opening our
Christmas stockings we turned the radio
to the message from England. They were
at war & this was the King's message
of hope to his beleaguered empire. I
remembered ten years ago when I
stood facing decisions, clearly across
the years his words:

I said to the man who stood at the
gate of the year, "Give me a light that
I may tread safely into the unknown"
And he ~~said~~ ^{replied}, "Go out into the darkness
& put your hand into the hand of God. That
shall be to you better than a light and
safer than a known way."

I did not know then who had written
these words - nor did anyone - but it
later came to light that they were by

spellbound, as they were told the good tidings of great joy — they didn't know then but it was to be good tidings of the joy of their salvation. They said the world ~~had been~~ ^{has been}, were being redeemed.

(And) But the message has an immediacy — not just for Ancient Israel, not just for the shepherds watching — but for us here and at this time.

Do you fear the future? Are you worried about what will happen to you this year? This is what it's all about. You need never fear again — listen again to that last verse =

The Lord has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall
see the salvation of our God.

You have nothing to fear — you have the strong arm of God to protect you. You have been redeemed. You are comforted.

This prophecy has 3 layers of meaning. 1 for the children of Israel at Isaiah's time, One at the time of Christ's birth - and one for us.

explain Deutero-Isaiah

The children of Israel + Judah were in their second captivity. First the Assyrians & then the Babylonians. Now Cyrus the Persian has become the ruler of the whole of the Middle East, with one of the first huge empires. But where the Assyrians & Babylonians tried to destroy & even erase captive nations - Cyrus was an enlightened emperor & had promised to ~~return~~ ^{return} the people to Zion, to rebuild the land, and to help them restore the temple at Jerusalem. The Deutero-Isaiah has reason to be ~~joyful~~ ^{exuberant} as he shouts for joy, welcoming the messengers who bring tidings of peace, joy, salvation. The messenger tells them that their God reigns.

The watchmen on the city walls shout for joy as they see the people of Zion returning to the destroyed nation. Out of the worst ^{disaster} ~~trouble~~ ^{the nations} Israel & Judah have been in, God has ^{released them} ~~comforted them~~ & shown them salvation.

Now that would have been enough - but God didn't just work once in history and let it go at that. God had

a greater message for us. This same passage speaks also of Jesus. At this Christmas season, when we are all aware of the coming of Jesus, let's look at that passage in the light of Jesus' coming. [How beautiful to know that Jesus comes to us, that Christ has procured our freedom from bondage - our slavery to the sins that separate us from God, that keep us from the Zion of God's company. How beautiful to know that Christ is born in our hearts, that God reigns within us, and because God is within us, we are comforted, we are strengthened, we are secure. God holds us, redeems us, ~~shows that he is strong~~ lives within us protecting us.]

We see the Angel messengers, how beautiful over the hills, telling the shepherds watching of the coming of the King who would save his people Israel. The ~~watchmen~~ ^{shepherds} praise their ~~watchmen~~

You got ~~two~~ Christmas presents last week.
You got Jesus and you got salvation.
They're both yours for the asking.

O.K. You know who Jesus is. but
what's "salvation"? Well, it's another
word for God's love. And let me see
if I can tell you how it works.

You know the story of the Toad Prince
(Frog Prince)? You haven't heard it for
30 years? Longer? This came to me
the other night when "Ro" Rasmussen
was doing a bit - a frog puppet -
at the children's party. So you'll have
"Ro" to thank if this works.

Once upon a time there was a
princess (no, honey, not a queen) and
she was out in her garden when
she saw an ugly old toad at her
feet. And the toad said "Ridic".
~~So~~. So the princess picked him up.
And he said "Honey, underneath this
warty exterior beats the heart of a
nobleman. If you'll ~~love~~ ^{love} me, I'll
turn into a handsome young prince.

Well, she looked at him and it was her turn to say "Ridic". No way was she going to love a toad. But she did, in spite of herself, become fond of him. Every morning he'd be there going "Ridic" - until one morning when she went out the toad was being mauled by a goose + about to be killed. She ran over and drove the goose off, picked the toad up, kissed it and lo + behold "Instant Prince". End of story. What has that to do w/ salvation?

You + I are the toads. Don't tell me you never felt like one. I do all the time. Ugly, warty, miserable. Sitting there all of a dull brown heap. God's the princess. God can't love that horrible little toad - or can he? That's the miracle. God does. Satan's the goose - giving us a real going over - and about to win, when God steps in. And by the miracle of love saves us. And the interesting thing is that we are transformed.

Some of the things I am going to say tonight, I have said before. However, they are things which bear repeating. Tonight I hope to be able to say some things about ~~love~~, about acceptance, and about transformation. I want to look at myself, at us -- as a church and a community --, and I want to look to the future for where we are going singly and together, even tho' at the outset it looks as though we are taking different paths.

Paul, in the 13th Chapter of Corinthians, is singing a hymn to the love of God, and to the love which that model teaches us, the model we were given in Jesus Christ.

One of the great difficulties many of us encounter is that we feel unloved -- and unlovable. Many of us have experienced being rejected by our families -- from very early childhood -- for being what God created us to be. We have been the orphans of the world, the only minority group whose very families oppress them. And it is not unlikely that we have grown up thinking of ourselves as not worthy of love. Thinking that we cannot, no matter what we do be loved. I think that because of this, the idea of a God who cares personally about humanity is particularly important for us. We ~~need~~ to know God's love, because many of us have known very little else of love.

It was nearly five years ago that the understanding of the love of God really hit home for me. I was at a children's party and a puppeteer named Ro Rasmussen was telling a story with a frog puppet, and the sudden awareness of the French fairy tale "The Frog Prince" came to me -- you remember the story -- but I'll refresh your memory of this/^{old}fairy tale -- for all you old fairies with

short memories. Once upon a time there was a princess -- she wasn't old enough to be a queen -- who lived a very isolated life in a beautiful palace. She didn't have too many playmates, so the animals around the palace grounds were her friends. Well, one morning she was out by the little brook that ran across the palace yard and she noticed an ugly old frog sitting on a rock going "Ridic, ridic." She bent down to pick him up, and the frog looked at her and spoke -- "Honey, he said, "Underneath this warty exterior beats the heart of a handsome prince (~~or princess, if that's the way your taste runs~~), and if you'll jsst love me, I'll turn into a handsome prince (or princess, if that's the way your taste runs). Well, there was no way the beautiful princess was going to love the ugly frog, and it was her turn to say, "Ridic." But, propinquity (don't you love that word) being what it is, she got used to seeing him around, began to look for him when he wasn't there, and to look forward to his "Ridic." Finally, one morning when she came out to play in the garden, she looked for her little warty friend and he wasn't there. Well, she began to search for him, and down by the brook she found him, in the beak of an old goose, who was shaking the life out of him. She ran up to the goose, took the frog out of his beak, and chased that old goose away. Then she lifted the little frog up and kissed his little warty head, and lo and behold "Instant Prince."

Now -- that's just an old fairy tale -- that has nothing to do with theologizing. Or does it? The Princess in the story is Jesus, the warty old frog is us. Satan is that goose. Have you ever felt like an old toad on a Monday morning -- brown, and warty and ugly, with that dark brown taste in your mouth. And thought to yourself,

as you looked in the mirror, "My God, even my mother couldn't love me this morning." We all have at some time or another. Jesus is the Princess, who loves us even when we are warty and toady and ugly. The goose is the devil who gives us the dozens, day after day and often we are about to succumb, beaten down by the torments of society or of our families -- when along comes Jesus and rescues us from the tormenter, and we are changed -- We are changed then and there on the spot to the beautiful child of a king -- the prince or princess we were really meant to be before ugliness, and greed, and an unloving society took its toll upon us.

Let's look at Paul again, If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels but have not love -- either of others or myself -- I am a noisy gong or a clanging symbol . . .

There the model is -- we are nothing without the love of God -- but we are still nothing if we do not pass that love along to all whom we meet. Remember, you and I didn't do anything to earn Jesus' love and there is no reason that anyone else should have to earn our love, either. It was given to us freely, and we need to learn to give it freely. We only have it if we give it away.

And the feeling that comes with the change in you and me when we are filled with That Love is the exultation the Psalmist sings of: O, sing unto the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord all the earth! You don't want to keep it to yourself, you need to buttonhole people and say -- hey, the most miraculous thing has happened to me -- I am loved -- God loves me, so much that God sent me Jesus to tell me how much I am loved. "Declare God's glory among the nations, God's wonderful works among all the people." Say unto the nations, The Lord reigns -- let the heavens be glad, the earth rejoice, let the sea roar, let the field exult. Then shall all the trees

of the wood sing for joy for he comes, he comes to judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his turth. There is nothing to be afraid of -- Ours is a righteous God, a just @od, a loving God, and by that love we are changed, and we become the true children of our loving God -- princes and princesses -- and we leafe the ugly old toad behind and walk out in newness of life.

Paul says it and I believe God was inspiring him when he said it:

In Jesus Christ , we are all the childre~~no~~of God, through faith.

For as many of us as have ~~put on Christ~~ been baptized into Christ have put on Christ -- that's the transformation -- we are wearing in our princely selves Jesus Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female -- there is neither gay nor straight for you are all one in Christ Jesus, and if you are Christ's then you are heirs (of a heavenly king) heirs -- princes and princesses -- according to promise.

I am leaving you -- this is the last thought I leave with you. You are God's holy child. You have a parent in heaven who owns ~~this~~ world and all it contains, and it is yours -- Remember: Fear not little flock, your parent in heaven wants to give you the kingdom. God wants the princes and princesses to inherit the kingdom.

Many years ago I heard the king of England talk to his subjects when things were at their worst. I can imagine -- MCC being what it is all over the Fellowship -- that there may be some hard ~~days~~ ahead. Hear this: He quoted a poem: I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, give me a light that I might tread safely into the unknown. And He said, ~~Go~~ out and put your hand into the hand of God, that shall be better to you than a light and safer than a known way. So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod

gladly into the night. And he led me to the hills and the breaking of day in the lone east."

You are not alone. You are the child of God, you are an heir or an heiress with a kingdom to possess. You have a God who will and does meet your need. Go out -- put your hand into the Hand of God, tread safely away from your old warty self into the loving free, and bountiful Kingdom. Go out expecting to find love, comfort for your life, forgiveness for your sins, redemption for your soul. Go out -- and let the toad in your life become the prince -- be transformed by the love of God.

A Playwright on America and Its Lost Hopes

By EUGENE IONESCO

(Late last year, Eugene Ionesco, the French playwright, returned from a visit to America, which he found depressing. In an article in the Paris daily, *Le Figaro*, and in a rare interview with the Associated Press, he deplored what he called "the American masochism." "I spoke out," the 67-year-old Mr. Ionesco told the AP, "because I discovered a sort of spirit in America that used to exist in France 10 years ago—a spirit of self-destructiveness, of masochism, an American anti-Americanism." When the editors of *The Asian Wall Street Journal* read this interview, they invited Mr. Ionesco to elaborate on his theme. Since then, the playwright has made another trip to America, spending a month teaching at the Santa Cruz campus of the University of California. The following is his report.)

* * *

Paris

I have just returned from California, as usual with an extraordinary feeling of dislocation, at once pleasant and unpleasant. I always feel a bit out of place in California—the food, people's behavior, the enormous distances. North of San Francisco, you find small towns that don't at all resemble the America as one knows or imagines it, and small ports that seem like false Italian villages. Yet there are many French people in these parts—professors, small businessmen, retired people. Those who are working seem to fit in, but the retired seem sadder and more lost than those you find in Cannes or Nice.

But my wife and I lived in a totally different California. That of the campus, another world, amidst wise and poorly paid professors. Among them, you frequently find well-known scholars who have adopted a Bohemian style of life. The older ones have lived through a variety of events in the past 15 years, a succession of revolts, both peaceful and violent. The professors have lived these events with wisdom and philosophy and they expect to see more. They can no doubt look forward to retirement, either in modest homes or, for the higher ranking among them, in handsome homes on the shore of the Pacific.

For the first time, the Pacific failed to move me. It is as if I had already seen all I was going to see of this world. I am at a point in life where I expect something else, something completely different, something like another manifestation of divinity, a totally different manifestation, a new dawn, a new earth, a new sky. This universe can no longer bring me anything but horror or, perhaps through divine grace, one never knows, an unexpectedly serene twilight.

But I am not telling the whole truth. The students I met interested and moved me. I had been in California before, last year, two years ago, three years ago, and the student climate has changed entirely, at least at the small and new university at Santa Cruz. There are nevertheless 6,000 students there, and every kind of building: theaters, concert halls, cafeterias, classrooms of course, canteens and restaurants of many kinds, dietetic and otherwise. Alcohol forbidden.

For several weeks I spoke to these students, about theater, my theater in which they were interested, and above all of the serious and terrifying things that are developing in the world today.

Two years ago, the students were quite different. They were already depoliticized, and they were interested only in their everyday lives and worries about their professional lives to come. University campuses are like oases, precarious paradises, and the students seemed afraid of one day leaving. Still, they felt good in their America and the rest of the world hardly interested them. For them, America was at the least an island or an inaccessible continent.

Now, however, they feel the growing danger that is approaching them from all directions. America is the last fortress, "the last fortress of liberty," as some of them put it, but they feel it is an America and a fortress under siege. The world's woes have now reached them, their consciousnesses. Perhaps we spoke more of those threats than of the theater. But they told me literature and the theater are dangerous too.

A few years ago (1962) a play of mine opened called *Le Pieton de l'Air* ("The Pedestrian of the Air"). We put it on again this past May. When it was first staged in Paris, the principal hero's prophecies of misfortune were greeted in Europe with derision. People still believed salvation would come from somewhere. They believed in Soviet Russia, they held illusions about Maoist China, they thought the wisdom of the Middle or Far East could save humanity.

But the destruction and the criminal errors of the West have inundated the countries of the East. Where is their wisdom now? Where are their cultures? Our ideologies have massacred them, to the point that the Asians now are massacring one another on their own. One wonders whether it isn't now that the real colonization, spiritual colonization, is starting to rage in those places whose ancestral cultures we tried to destroy. Very young American students have given up hope for the West. They no longer hope for anything from the East. They have given up on man.

By rehearsing and staging "*Le Pieton de l'Air*," they discovered that the prophecy of misfortune included in the play has already been realized in most of the world and that it is approaching them too. Now they know that the dangers and catastrophes that rage in Africa, that threaten Western Europe or that are about to blow up in South America will not stop there. Of course there are American failings and they are conscious of these. But what troubles them the most is the danger that man represents for man, and the terrible suspicion that man can no longer do anything but evil. They tell me that we have started out on the wrong foot. The industrial world, which was supposed to create well-being, instead throwing us into catastrophe. These may be banalities, but they are also truths. They are banalities if they are no more than mental games or ideologies, but ardent truths if they are truly felt, if they are authentic, if they are the recognition of the cosmic storm that is building.

While they rehearsed my play, it was their anguish that they rehearsed and that deepened. They asked me to come and talk to them, to tell them whether I could believe, whether anyone could believe, in any

kind of new light. At first, I answered with silence and shrugs of my shoulders. Finally I felt obliged to answer them with something I felt, perhaps, deeply inside myself: "You can't know whether and when the end of time will come, and hope isn't dead."

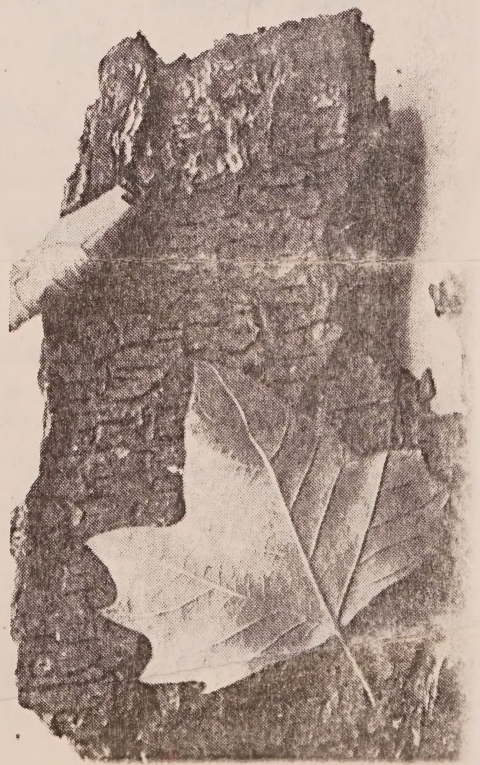
A very young man, blond, came up to me and asked, "You still have hope?" "Of course, of course," I murmured. "Well sir," he said, "I don't have any left."

"What are you going to do with your life then?" I asked him. "Look, listen, wait," he said. "But I have no reason to act. It's the final apocalypse I'm waiting for."

Eugene Ionesco is a leader of the theater of the absurd movement that grew up in Europe after World War II. Among his 18 plays are "The Lesson," "The Chairs," "Rhinoceros," "Le Pieton de l'Air" and "Le Roi Se Meurt." He also writes essays and novels, and lives in Paris. This article was translated from French by E.S. Browning, a staff reporter of The Asian Wall Street Journal, where it first appeared.

By Joy
Until we can
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Cheers for Friends of the Underdog

By FREDERICK C. KLEIN

For Friends of the Underdog, that unofficial but vast society of sports fans, baseball's late regular season was more than

It's as hard for us underdog-lovers as anyone to justify our distaste for free agency; like all red-blooded Americans, we acknowledge the principle that a man can

Rich, Young Ruler

Years ago, when I was new to MCC I first heard Howard Wells ^{who was} discussing Christian ethics for gay people, say that not coming out was the one "unethical" thing that gay people could do. I was thoroughly nailed into my closet at the time and was horrified.

Yesterday, Ginny & I went walking up College Hill & on to Thayer St - just looking around, shopping etc. and we were heading home and Ginny was kidding me - a little chidingly - for being too open & not worrying about the looks, the comments, etc.

Last week, Barbara Kendaall prayed about the need to be who she was, despite the comments on the bus, etc.

It dawned on me that the time had come to preach Howard's

Rick Young, Butler

Years ago, when I was young, I first heard Howard ^{was} discussing Christian ethics for gay people, say that the coming one was the one "unethical" that gay people loved so. I was thoughtful, pulled into my class at the time and was terrified.

Yesterday, during a 2 hour workshop up college this & on to Chicago & first looking around, shopping etc. and we were looking for a little clothing - for being too open & not knowing about the books, the movement, etc.

Just now, Barbara ^{has} been saying about the need to be with the new, despite the comments on the last, etc.

It seems to me that the time has come to present Howard's

sermon on Christian ethics from a
gay perspective.

I refer to the story of the rich,
young ruler who comes to Jesus
to ask "What shall I do, etc." &
Jesus running down the 10
commandments for him. Well, says he,
I do all that. Then, says
Jesus, "sell all you have &
come follow me." Not good,
very rich young ruler, says, and
went away sorrowing.

O.K. Now, you & I aren't rich -
per se. We don't have a whole lot
of worldly goods. But lets look at
what we do have to lose.

Jobs

Home

lover

Relationships & others

Yet, ~~what~~ if we do understand the

ethics of this situation, we are saying "I can't be seen, I can't come out. I am frightened of what people will think of me, say to me, do to me." Howard Wines said "That's idolatry!" I remember saying to myself, as many of you must be saying - "That's an awfully strong statement - idolatry".

Let me try to explain. Anything you put before God - anything that is more important is idolatry. The rich young ruler's idolatry had to do - money. Security & safety come first - O.K. that's idolatry. Why? Because if we really trust God there is no question of what will happen to us if we come out. God will take care of it - God will handle the oppressor, God will be your sure protection - and if you & I are not willing to trust that we are idolaters.

Jesus said, "Leave all & follow me." Keep the laws & commandments, sell all you have, trust me & follow me & you will be saved - Saved by God's grace - not because of anything you can do - but because ours is a merciful God.

The rich & ruler was a good person - He behaved according to all questions as a good man - but Jesus said it would be ^{more} difficult for him to enter heaven than for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle.

Goodness - our own personal goodness has nothing to do with what we are talking about. Trust in God's goodness is what it's all about. Trust that God can save us - keep us & eternally protect us demands some sacrifice on our part. God is ~~our~~ ^{my} sure defender whom shall I fear? Says the psalmist.

Anything less is idolatry. Anything less is not taking God's ~~word~~ word for us or Christ's injunction to us.

It is also not giving yourself & others space to grow. It is not giving your faith a chance to become mature — to your friends or employers a chance to experience God's grace in their lives.

You, of course, must be the judge of when you do this. When you are ready, when your faith is strong enough, when you have done the groundwork & laid the foundation in a good enough, & healthy enough relationships then will be the right time — but only if your faith in God is strong enough will that time finally come.

God saves. we have nothing to fear except our own fear — and with

God's help we can overcome even
that enemy. As Pogo says, "We
have met the enemy & he is us."

I am persuaded that God is able to
keep that which I've committed unto
him against that day.

BONDAGE AND DISCIPLINE

One of the hardest things for us as human beings is to admit that we are wrong. Do you remember when you were a kid and something had happened, and your teacher got hold of you and said, "Now you go apologize to _____" and how hard it was to do. You fought it, and you were sullen about it, and you pulled away -- and you were darned if you were going to apologize. *AND how perfunctory you were when you did apologize* And we get older and we don't get better. It's hard for any of us to admit that we are often wrong, and that we could do better. Oh, we'll go through the motions, that's easy. Someone gets up here in the church and says, "Let's all join in the prayer of confession," and we all go through our little paces. But let someone come along and say, "Admit you're a sinner--" -- and you know what we do, we get on our little high horses, and we say "I am not! You're picking on me, again." And we get defensive, and we argue, and we're right back being the little kid denying that we've done anything wrong. And really, it's not so terrible to be a sinner, at least you're in good company. Scripture tells us "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

It's Lent, and traditionally in Christendom, Lent has been a time for introspection and contemplation, and atonement -- because if it were not because we are all sinners, there would have been no need for the cross -- there would have been no Good Friday, and even worse there would have been no Easter. We would have been all dead in our sins, as Scripture has it. Now I'm not about to tell you what constitutes sin -- I am no theologian, and I'm willing to let theologians argue about what sin is. I'm an exhorter -- which means that I am allowed to tell you what to do about sin and to tell you what ^{I think} God had in mind about sin, because exhorters are allowed to exhort you to do better. So let me begin by suggesting an idea to you. Sin is whatever you are a slave to.

Now, I'm not talking about our little make-believe games of bondage and discipline where we play at being slaves -- I'm talking about the things that really enslave us. I guess in a way I am talking about the really masochistic things we do to ourselves, the really self-destructive things we practice on ourselves, the things that we want to get rid of but can't -- that have us in their grip and that we need to get out of ourselves if we are going to be mature human beings. So, don't anyone come up later and say "You said we were all sinners because we're homosexuals." I did not and I do not. I'm talking about those things in yourself that you want and need to get rid of if you are going to grow into a mature Christian -- and your gayness, ^{IS NOT ONE OF THEM. YOUR GAYNESS} may well be a sign of maturity, because you have finally come to grips with a part of yourself, faced it, accepted it and learned to live comfortably and maturely with it.

But all of us have other things in our lives -- or maybe it is our sexuality -- at least those times when we mis-use it rather than using it wisely and in truly grown-up fashion -- that we are talking about. I'm talking about slavery.

I want to look at two passages of Scripture: The first about love for a slave -- and the second about even greater love for a slave. A Roman captain -- maybe one of us, because there is some historical evidence that the young slave might have been this Roman soldier's catemite -- at any rate, he loved ^(John Boswell is writing a book which includes this information) the boy, and the boy fell ill, and the Roman asked some Jewish friends if Jesus could heal the youngster. Apparently this Roman believed strongly in the faith of the Jews -- living and working in Palestine had changed him. He had given enough money to build a synagogue, was well-respected in Jewish circles for being a good man, and was a humble man in spite of his position. Jesus agreed to come with them and help this man and boy. He didn't judge them, he wanted to help.

As he was going down the road toward the Roman's house, the captain sent some friends to tell Jesus not to put himself out -- but just say that the boy was healed, and he believed strongly enough that Jesus had power enough to heal the boy. Now this Roman understood authority -- and believed Jesus when

Jesus had said that he had the authority to heal, forgive sins, or whatever. The Roman was used to saying "Do it," and it got done. Jesus was amazed at the man's faith and admitted that even among the Jews he had never met a man with such faith -- and when they got to the Roman captain's house, the boy was well. Such is the experience of faith.

Now I want to come back to your and my slavery. You see, we, too, have a *A MASTER WHO LOVED US SO MUCH THAT HE DIED FOR US.* loving Master if you want it that way. Paul says that we have a choice of masters. We can choose sin as our master and wind up with death for our troubles, or we can live in obedience to Jesus, the ~~Good~~ *M*aster, and be acquitted of sin and live eternally. We can turn (and that's what repentance really means -- a total turning of your whole person around -- away from sin and toward God) and give yourself as a slave to Jesus.

You know, in Old Testament days, every seven years slaves were freed -- and they had the choice of going or staying. But if they stayed, they were taken to the door of the house, and their ear was placed against the door, and a small nail was driven through their ear as a sign that they were a willing slave. As Christians, we are willing slaves -- did you know that that's what the Roman collar on a minister's shirt stands for -- the slave's collar --

As Christians, because Christ has freed us from our old master, sin, we choose to become willing slaves to God and Christ.

Paul says that when we were the slaves of sin, we didn't bother with righteousness, we were content with our sins. And often now, we are ashamed to think of the things we used to do, because all of them end in eternal doom. And in many ways that's true. The kinds of self-destructive things we get into can really destroy our bodies, our minds, our emotional health -- I always feel that they are the things we do because we feel so ashamed of ourselves that we try to run from ourselves, and instead of having just the one problem of whatever it is we are doing wrong, we wind up with two problems -- the thing

we were guilty about, plus the unwholesome way we are dealing with the guilt. Whether that is alcohol, drugs, the eternal round of sexual seeking, self-flagellation of whatever kind becomes another problem for us, and we are caught in the middle of guilt, running away, fouling up, feeling guiltier, running away more -- until it becomes a vicious circle. But Jesus can break that circle, can break that enslavement to self-destruction-- because that's just what Paul means when he says that the wages of sin is death -- self-destruction -- but God's gift to us is life -- everlasting. We are given our lives back in this world, and we are given eternal life in the next.

There is nothing shameful about being a sinner and being repentant -- there is something sad about being a sinner and being reluctant to part with it, *AND THERE IS SOMETHING TRAGIC* in being enslaved to it. Christ opens up our lives and frees us -- and in that freeing process we become new and whole, and healthy, just like the slave boy of the Roman captain. God shows love for us. Christ shows us his healing touch. And the amazing thing is that we have a choice. We can truly choose to follow Jesus and be healed, because Jesus has the power. All it takes is your faith to make it happen. Reach up and out in faith, accept Christ's healing hand on you, and be made whole. Become then a willing slave to a good master. Amen.

Just at that time the highly prized slave of a Roman army captain was sick and near death. When the captain heard about Jesus, he sent some respected Jewish elders to ask him to come and heal his slave. So they began pleading earnestly with Jesus to come with them and help the man. They told him what a wonderful person the captain was.

"If anyone deserves your help, it is he," they said, "for he loves the Jews and even paid personally to build us a synagogue!"

Jesus went with them; but just before arriving at the house, the captain sent some friends to say, "Sir, don't inconvenience yourself by coming to my home, for I am not worthy of any such honor or even to come and meet you. Just speak a word from where you are, and my servant boy will be healed! I know, because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my men. I only need to say "Go!" and they go; or "Come" and they come; and to my slave, "Do this or that," and he does it. So just say, "Be healed!" and my servant will be well again!

Jesus was amazed. Turning to the crowd he said, "Never among all the Jews in Israel have I met a man with faith like this."

And when the captain's friends returned to his house, they found the slave completely healed. Luke 7:2-10

Don't you realize you can choose your own master? You can choose sin (with death) or else obedience (with acquittal). The one to whom you offer yourself --he will take you and be your master and you will be his slave. You once chose to be the slaves of sin, now you have obeyed with all your heart the teaching to which God has committed you. And now you are free from your old master, sin; and you have become slaves to your new master, righteousness.

I speak this way, using the illustration of slaves and masters because it is easy to understand: In those days when you were slaves of sin you didn't bother much with righteousness. And what was the result? Evidently not good, since you are ashamed now even to think about those things you used to do, for all of them end in eternal doom. But now you are free from the power of sin and are slaves of God, and his benefits to you include holiness and everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:16-23

BONDAGE AND DISCIPLINE

One of the hardest things for us as human beings is to admit that we are wrong. Do you remember when you were a kid and something had happened, and your teacher or your mother got hold of you and said, "Now you apologize to _____", and how hard it was to do. You fought it and you were sullen about it, and you pulled away -- and you were darned if you were going to apologize. Do you remember how perfunctory you were when you did apologize. Well, we get older but we don't get better. It's hard for any of us to admit that we are often wrong, and that we could do better. Oh, we'll go through the motions, that's easy. Someone gets up here in the church and says, "Let's all join in the prayer of confession," and we all go through our little paces. But let someone come along and say, "Admit you're a sinner --" and right away we're ready to fight about it. We get on our high horses and we say, "I am not a sinner. You're picking on me because I'm (black, homosexual, -- whatever it's not popular to be.) And because we are defensive about that one thing, we cannot admit to the other things in our lives that may be even more wrong. Nothing in our blackness, our homosexuality, our difference says that we are unable to sin -- but we argue like the little kid denying that he's done anything wrong. And really, it's not so terrible to be a sinner, at least you're in good company. Scripture tells us "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

It's Lent, and traditionally in Christendom, Lent has been a time for introspection and contemplation -- leading to atonement. "Humanity," writes Karl Barth "does not seek for solutions but for salvation." Can any of us deny that we are sinners when we look at the newspaper reportage of our community, catch the reflections of ourselves on the TV screen, see the caricatures of

in our lives that is giving us a problem -- we wind up with two problems, the other the far more serious one. Our guilt drives us to destructive behavior and we become caught in a vicious cycle of dealing with our guilt in an unwholesome way, running away, being destructive, feeling guiltier, running faster and harder, doing something more that we feel even guiltier about, and it goes on and on. But Paul tells us that we can break that cycle because Jesus has given us a way out of enslavement to self-destruction -- Paul says that the wages of sin is death -- self destruction -- but through Christ, God's gift to us is life everlasting. We are given back our lives in this world, and promised eternal life in the next.

There is nothing shameful about being a sinner and being repentent. There is something sad about being a sinner and being reluctant to part with our sins, and there is something tragic about being a slave to sin and being unwilling to change masters. Christ opens up our lives and frees us -- and in that freeing process we become new and whole and healthy, just like the slave boy beloved of the Roman captain. God shows love for us. Christ shows the healing touch. And the amazing thing is that we have a choice. We can truly choose to follow Jesus and be healed, because Jesus has that power. All it takes is your leap of faith to believe that it will happen and it will. Reach up and out in faith, accept Christ's healing hand on you, and be made whole. Become then a willing slave to a good master. Amen.

met a Jew with such faith -- and when they got to the Roman captain's house, the boy was well. Such is the experience of faith.

Now I want to come back to your and my slavery. You see, we too have a loving Master -- a Master who loved us so much that he died for us -- who wants us well, and who believes that there is an authority that will heal us -- and if we will just choose to do so we can be made whole. Paul also says that we have a choice of masters. We can choose sin -- and believe me, we do choose our masters every single day of our lives -- we choose to do good or evil -- we can choose sin and wind up with death for our troubles, or we can choose Jesus, the Good Master, and be acquitted of sin and live eternally. We can turn (and that's what repentance really means -- turning your whole self around away from sin and toward God), and give yourself as a slave to Jesus.

You know, in Old Testament days every seven years all slaves were freed, and they had the choice of going or staying. But if they stayed, they were taken to the door of the house, and their ear was placed against the door frame and a small nail was driven through their ear as a sign that they were a willing slave. As Christians, we are willing (committed) slaves. Did you know that that is what the Roman collar on a minister's shirt stands for -- the slave's collar. As Christians, because Christ has freed us from our old master, sin, we choose to become willing slaves to God and Christ.

Paul says that when we were the slaves of sin, we didn't bother with righteousness, we were content with our sins. And often now, we are ashamed to think of the things we used to do, because all of them end in eternal doom. And in many ways that's true. The kinds of self-destructive things we get into can really destroy our bodies, our minds, our emotional health. For us as gays, I think they are the things we do because we think we have something to be ashamed of and we try to run from them and run from ourselves into sex, drinking, drugs -- whatever, and instead of just having the one thing

because we were gay -- and don't you leather queens come up and say I said leather is wrong -- that's not what I mean. I'm talking about the things that you want and need to get rid of if you are going to grow into a mature Christian -- and your gayness is not one of them. Your gayness may well be a sign of maturity, because it may mean that you have finally come to grips with a part of yourself, faced it, accepted it, and learned to live comfortably and maturely with it.

But all of us have other things in our lives -- and that may include our sexuality, particularly if we are mis-using it to the detriment of others and to the destruction of ourselves -- These things are a form of slavery.

I want to look at those two passages of Scripture, because they talk about love for a slave. A Roman captain -- who may be one of us, according to Dr. John Boswell, who is writing a book about the role of gays in Christianity -- and who says that the young boy may have been this Roman captain's catemite. At any rate, he loved the boy and the boy was ill enough to be near death. The Roman soldier had many friends in the Jewish community -- he had once built them a synogogue. Living and working in Palestine had changed this man -- and he was a good man and a humble man in spite of his position. Jesus agreed to come with his friends and help his young servant. He did not judge them, he wanted to help.

As Jesus was going down the road to the Roman's house, he was met by some friends of the captain's who told Jesus that the Roman had asked him not to go out of his way to come to his house -- but to just say that the boy was healed, and he believed strongly enough that Jesus had the power that if he just said the word the boy would be healed. Now this Roman understood authority -- and believed Jesus when he said that he had the authority to heal, forgive sins, or whatever. The Roman was used to saying, "Do it," and it got done. Jesus was amazed at the man's faith, and admitted that he had never

human beings that we are at work and in our social situations, watch ourselves in interaction with others. At our best we are a paradox: half angel, half demon; eager and bored; violent yet yearning for peace; pursuing hungrily our daily bread but too lazy to find food for our minds and souls.

We look for spiritual band-aids for our souls, splints for our fractured personalities, soporifics and opiates to calm our pain, and long to be truly healed to wholeness and holiness and fullness -- we long for salvation and still fool ourselves into the denials that we are sinners in need of a Savior. Realize though, that as we face the holiest days of the Christian year -- Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter -- that if it were not because God recognized our need for salvation there would have been no cross, no Good Friday, and even worse there would have been no Easter. We would all be dead in our sins, as Scripture has it. I am not about to tell you what constitutes sin -- I am no professional theologian, and I am willing to let them argue about what sin is -- I am an exhorter, and I am willing to accept the idea that I am a sinner, and to exhort you to do what I believe God gave us as an answer to the condition of being sinners.

Let me begin by suggesting an idea to you. Sin is whatever you are a slave to.

Now, I am not talking about our little make-believe games of bondage and discipline where we play at being slaves and masters. I am talking about the things that really enslave us. I guess in a way I am thinking of the truly masochistic things we do to ourselves, the self-destructive things we practice on ourselves, the things we would dearly love to get rid of but can't -- that have us in their grip and that we need to have God's help with if we are going to become mature human beings. And I am thinking about the sadistic things that we do to others, that we can't seem to stop doing no matter how hurt the other is, and no matter how our hurting them alienates us from them. So, don't anyone come up to me later and say, "You said we were all sinners

We welcome to our service this evening a group of courageous women - the Sisters of Mercy - who have obeyed the dictates of their hearts in being here, in supporting the gay Catholic community by making space available to ~~them~~ ^{them} at McAuley House, and by having chosen as an area of special ministry in social justice the gay community. I would like for us to rise and welcome & honor them for their support of our people.

Every gay person in this room has something in common with the Eunuch on his way to Jerusalem to worship. With him, we worship ~~the~~ God, whom ~~other~~ ^{other} people tell us we will not enter the Kingdom of heaven.

The Ethiopian eunuch was an interesting man because he was caught up in the cross-currents of history & social practice. In some cultures Eunuchs ~~were~~ ^{could be} respected, honored persons even tho' they were emasculated to make them fit to serve in the women's quarters. This eunuch was an important man - he had charge of the treasury of the Candace - the queen mother of Ethiopia. In that country the king was so holy that he was permitted to do no labor - not even reign in his own kingdom. Instead, his mother was the actual ruler, the Candace. This eunuch handled all the money for the queen mother & had been to Jerusalem to worship.

What was an Ethiopian, a eunuch doing worshipping the God of the Jews anyway? He had discovered, on his own, that his native gods were meaningless & that

the Almighty God meant something more in his life. He was a convert, but Judaism said he could never be truly a Jew because 1. He had not been born to a Jewish mother. 2. He was emasculated + no one so blemished could be a Jew. But even if the Jews would not permit him in, he continued to read & study the prophets. And so we find him on the road reading aloud from Isaiah. Now, the Holy Spirit doesn't always follow the dictates of humanity. Jesus says that the pneuma, the wind or the Spirit blows where it will, so the Spirit told Philip to join the eunuch in his chariot and discuss the passage with him. Well, they were discussing the Suffering Servant -

As a sheep led to the slaughter
or a lamb before its shearer is dumb
so he opens not his mouth

In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken up from the earth.

Strange passage for the eunuch to be reading, no?
No wonder he questions "Is the prophet speaking of himself or someone else?"

Here is a savior the eunuch can identify with. A humiliated savior, a ~~the~~ person to whom justice was denied. This man, whom Judaism cast out even when he believed despite all they could do to reject him. It was indeed good news to him. It is no wonder that as the first water they came to, he asked to be baptized. He was ready, more than

the thought the most prominent person in
his life. He was a convert, but Judaism
could be raised never be truly a Jew
because. He had not been there to a
Jewish mother. The two unassailable +
no one so identified could be a Jew. But
even if the Jews would not permit him
in, he continued to read & study the
prophecy. But as his time for the
Jewish people came from Israel. Now, the
Holy Spirit does not allow follow the
teachings of humanists. Jesus says that
the prophets, the Jewish or the Spirit does
not in mine, so the Spirit the Philip
to join the church in his character.
think of the prophecy with him, but, they
were discussing the suffering servant -

to a deep led to the thought
as a Jew before its place is about
to be open, not his mouth

On his translation further was done in
this one beside his generation?
for his life is taken up from the last.

these people for the church to be reading, to?
the first of the "So the prophet speaking
of himself or someone else?"

For as having the church can identify with.
I humbly raise, a person to follow
further from others. This man, when Judaism
was out from under the Jewish people
they could be a perfect Jew. It was because
that how to him. It is no wonder that
as the first man they came to, he asked to
be baptized. He was ready, more than

ready to believe, because the Savior was a person he could relate to.

Father John McNeil, author of The Church and the Homosexual, often uses this story and Jesus' words about eunuchs to relate to the gay community. In Matthew 19, Jesus is being asked about divorce and remarriage & suggests celibacy instead. Then he says "There are eunuchs who have been so from birth, there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, & there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom. One who is able to receive this, let that one receive it." Father McNeil suggests that Jesus is referring to homosexuals who are such naturally, to those - who like our Ethiopian friend - were made such ~~from~~ by others, & those who have chosen a celibate life for spiritual reasons.

By old Jewish law, all of us would have no place in the Kingdom for it was only in marrying & begetting were women assured of a place in the Kingdom.

Why would any of us follow the gay Christ? Why would any of us ^{who are gay} seek out a religion which still rejects us? Why do we not go off seeking other gods, other kinds of ideals than those which Christianity offers.

I think it is because with the prophet Jeremiah we have looked at those other gods & know them for what they are, carved idols, wood cut in the forest adorned with silver & gold. So weak that they totter unless they are nailed to their bases.

Scarecrows in a cucumber field!
Dumb, motionless - having no power to do either evil or good.

So many of our friends are out there, tho' chasing the gods of silver & gold - having exchanged their god-given identity for positions they are convinced give them power, money. So many of us have wasted years of our lives trying to join the churches that refuse to accept us - like the Ethiopian eunuch. We have discovered like him tho' that the Suffering Servant, the Christ - does not reject us & we can identify with a Savior crucified by society. We have been there. We have worshipped the true God, not because we fear God, but because we have discovered like Jeremiah how great our God is, how powerful God is. We have also discovered that we need not fear God's punishment for who we are, but worship God because it is God's due.

Jesus said to us "God so loved the world that whosoever believeth should not perish, but have everlasting life." As lay Christians we claim that promise, identifying ourselves as the whosoever

I think it is because until the
graphical premises are laid out
in their other parts & know them
for what they are, cannot believe
I would see in the forest of names with
names & parts. So much that they follow
until they are needed to their names.

However in a common field!
Brent, Montclair - looking too
green to be better but of good.

So many of our friends are out there
the, looking the parts of names & parts -
having problems, their good - given
identity for positions they are convinced
give that. Some money! So many of
our friends, looking up at our friends
trying to find the children that
refuse to accept us - like the 19th in
names. We have discovered the first
the that the suffering report, the
Christ - how not this too & we can
identify with a friend convinced by
society. We have been there. We have
known the true life, not because
we find the but because we have
discovered the friends that great our
that is, the friends that is, the true
also discovered that the true (not just)
the is a commitment to who we are, but
making the decision it is this is true.

Have said to me "that to love the
which that unknown, but not shared
not find, but have excellent life."
So the Christian, we know that (the)
the friends are the friends

who believe, who turn to the one true God; the Christ who is the redeemer of all; and who become those upon whom the Spirit breathes, whether or not the established church will have us.

See there is water. "What is to hinder our ^{being} baptized?" And as Philip ~~told~~ ^{led} the eunuch we go down into the water, are baptized, & rise to walk in newness of life. Amen.

who believe, who turn to the over-
head; the Christ who is the presence
of all; and who become those who
believe the Spirit (Heavenly, invisible)
of God the Father and Christ

have now.
"The there is nothing" which is to
bring our being together. "But
as Philip ~~the~~ the Church of Jesus
into the world, our Father, or Jesus
to dwell in the presence of life. Amen.

Reconciled to what?

Socrates said, "The slaves' idea of freedom is to have slaves of his own." And I think sometimes we find ourselves guilty of enslaving others in the name of freedom.

I found myself guilty of this recently. Three of us have been having a running battle about sexual responsibility. And sadly, it has been a battle - rather than a reasoned discussion. I have made it a battle because I have been angry.

It all started about the Revere cases as the Boston area was compounded by the Boston Library cases and came to a head when we were discussing a whole raft of sexual issues at a board meeting.

I am the product of my life. I have never failed to speak from my own experience when an issue came ~~from~~ ^{my} up which I could relate to something which had happened in my own life. Sexual use of children by adults is something I feel strongly about. I must tell you that my reason is very, very strongly part of my own history. I was a sexually molested child - once by a stranger in a park when I was 10 or 11, and at 13 I was raped at home by my 16 year old brother.

I feel strongly on this subject. Having read, Against Our Will - Men, Women & Rape by Susan Brownmiller, I found my own experiences reflected in the experiences of many women. A comment was

made by one of our brothers at that meeting and from the well of my own anger I responded that women had been conditioned to a lifetime of blame & responsibility for their sexuality and it was time men were also asked to be responsible for theirs.

I hurt my brother by the remark. Another brother came with the comment that I had hurt his friend by it - and either I was still smarting or hurting by not being understood - but my anger showed.

We needed to sit down & talk about what we were all hurting about and to see why we were all angry - because for all of ~~the~~ us this was putting us in places where we live - our very guts, our inner lines, our picture of ourselves as human beings.

I called one of the Elders the other day for advice on the subject and found myself saying "I am a revolutionary and feel there are certain sacrifices one makes when one is in a revolution -" then I heard myself speaking & realized that in accepting a pastorate I had already made a commitment to a very different revolution than the one I had originally started by fighting.

My own religious beliefs are mine. I cannot make anyone believe as I do - and I am not in a position to judge another's life. Each of us must make existential choices - that is, choices of how we will live in light of God's Movement in our lives.

None of us has the right to make those choices for others, and I had usurped another's privilege of coming to God on his own terms. Please realize that I had done it from a place of my own pain - and not because I had intended to hurt someone else.

I have been in pain about this all week and spent sleepless nights and long hours looking for an answer.

My answer came in my conversation with the elder, and in looking over the sermon material today.

My action in condemning someone else was rather like the disciples in seeing the waste. They were not wrong in trying to feed the poor - but they had missed the essential of Jesus' teaching. Christ may be better served in ways we do not always understand.

I do hope that in light of scripture we would all examine our lives and be responsible for those places where we need to draw closer to God, and to be very certain that what we are doing we are doing with God as our companion always.

For the Christian life is a life of self-examination, confession of fault when we are aware - within ourselves that we have been wrong - but it must always be a life of love & caring. We must also remember that at the time we accept Christ our old person dies & we become new creatures in Christ. Our behavior, our message must be one of reconciliation - for we are ambassadors for Christ and what each of us is & does reflects Christ & the Christian message to all around us.

None of us is perfect - we all make mistakes & we are all guilty of reacting from our own needs without thinking of the need of others. I am no less human - to become a minister does not suddenly make one perfect.

I, too, confess to anger & even self-righteousness. Please understand that like many people's - it comes out of a place of pain & the lack of forgiveness in my own life. I hope that this will lay it to rest & we can come together & discuss needs in the future on a less hostile plane.

Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Israel.
Thus says the Lord:

Learn not the customs of the nations,
And have no fear of the signs of the heavens,
For the nations fear them.

For the cult idols of the nations are nothing,
wood cut from the forest,
Wrought by craftsmen with the adze,
adorned with silver and gold.

With nails and hammers they are fastened,
that they may not totter.

Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they,
they cannot speak;
They must be carried out, for they cannot walk.
Fear them not, they can do no harm,
neither is it in their power to do good.

No one is like you, O Lord, great are you
great & mighty is your name.

Who would not fear you, King of the nations,
for it is your due.

Among all the wisest of the nations, and
in all their domain, there is none like you.

One & all they are dumb & senseless,
these idols they teach about are wooden:
Silver strips brought from Tarshish and
Gold from Ophir.

The work of the craftsman and the handiwork
of the smith

Clothed with violet and purple -
all of them the work of artisans.

When the words of the Lord, I heard of Jesus
those say the Lord.

There was the location of the nation,
and there was fear of the nation,
the nation from them.

For the full idea of the nation are working,
work out from the great
the people of the nation with the nation,
the nation with nation and great.

With nation and nation, they are working,
that they say and nation.

Like a nation in a nation, they are working,
they are working,
they are working in a nation, for the nation work,
the nation work, they are working,
the nation is in the nation, to the great.

To one in the nation, I said, great are you,
great & nation, in your nation.

Who nation not for you, that of the nation,
in it is great nation.

Great are the nation of the nation, and
in the nation, there is a nation, in you.

One & all, they are great & nation,
there are the great nation, in nation.

There are the great nation, in nation,
the nation, in nation, in nation,
the nation, in nation, in nation.

With nation and nation,
all of them, the nation, in nation.

Psalm 33

John 3 - 1-17

~~John~~ John 2: 7-12

There is an old Persian story about the ~~holy man~~ who met Pestilence on the road one day. And Pestilence told ~~the holy man~~ that he would visit the city & take the lives of 500. And Pestilence struck & many more than that died. The next day the holy man again met Pestilence & spoke, "You told me you would only take 500 - yet 5000 died." & Pestilence replied "I kept my word, I took 500 - fear took all the rest."

Yesterday nearly 300 of us marched, the largest crowd we have ever had. We were gay, we were proud, we were beautiful & praise the Lord, we were LOUD. For many, it was a first time of walking head up, facing the sunshine, down the main street of their own home town. The sun is still in the sky, the earth is still in orbit. The stars have not dropped from their places. We are alive! God rules. We have overcome fear - the fear within ourselves and 200 of us will be stronger for having marched. 200 of us will be an example to a town ~~that~~ that needs the example of free, ~~true~~, courageous, strong gay people walking openly in the streets & saying to the world "we are not afraid."

Nicodemus was a little like our brothers + sisters who did not march with us. He was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews. Today, he would be a highly placed government official - maybe city council President who was also very big in church circles. (A little like Buddy Hutton, maybe). He was a Christian, too - but he was in the closet. There is a little of Nicodemus in all of us - we know about Jesus, we know about God, we've seen the power + it is working in our lives, but we're afraid to come out. It's like our gayness, we know about being gay, we know the place our love + our sexuality has in our lives. Sometimes we're even convinced that the person we are in relationship with is a gift from God. But we're afraid to come out. Nicodemus visited Jesus at night. We live our gayness out at night. In the daylight, we are purer than the Pharisees, we have our places of power in the daylight. At night we skulk up to our gayness. At night Nicodemus skulked up to Jesus.

Jesus zapped him: Unless you are born anew, you cannot see the kingdom of heaven. Unless you come out + are radicalized, you will not know what it is like to be truly gay. You'll always just be a homosexual.

Now, wait a minute Jesus, I can't go back in & be born over, I'm a known man. Wait a minute, my gay friend, I can't become any different than I am now. I'm comfortable, I can't change.

Jesus said to Nicodemus "Unless you are born of water & the Spirit you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Unless you are radicalized & reborn as an activist, open gay person you will never know what Heaven is really like. You'll always be going through your little hell.

You have to realize, Nicodemus, that this new life is a gift of the Spirit, moving where it will & changing lives & true happiness comes with this rebirth.

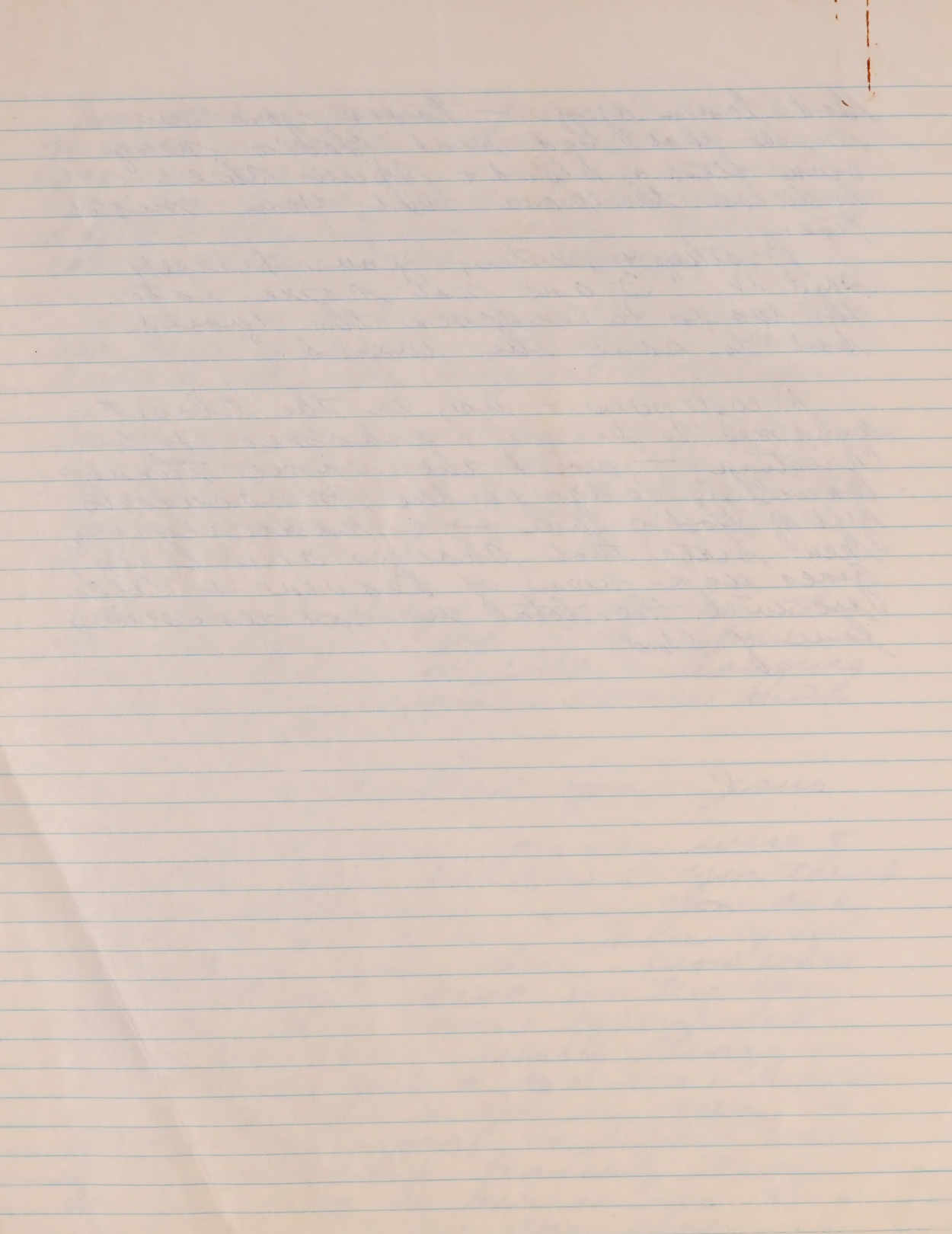
I don't understand you, Jesus.

OK. Nicodemus you are wise & you have your position & you think you're important. But you only know the half of it. Those of us who have been there know what we are talking about, we tell you what we have seen & experienced. I tell you about earthly things - like coming out & you don't believe me about that & you've seen it - what are you going to believe when I tell you about heavenly things. Are you going to believe me any more when I tell you that

God loves you - loves you so much that God sent God's very own flesh + blood + spirit child to die on the cross that you might live.

Brother + sister, Jesus himself said it. "I am not come into the world to condemn the world but to save the world."

Nicodemus + us, in the closet - ashamed to be gay, ashamed to be Christian - one & the same thing. Unwilling to accept the miraculous gift of God's love - a radicalizing new birth that changes our lives, gives us a view of Heaven + fills us with the total uncondemning love of God.



PenmaLife

CONFECTION GALLERY





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FOL

✓ Sunday is St. Francis Sunday - The 501st
commemoration of his birth. It ends a
year of celebration, especially in California.
What a Fine Place Saint Francis and the
This World Would Be Church of Tomorrow

PETER MAURIN

What a fine place
this world would be
if Dualist Humanists
tried to be human
to men.

What a fine place
this world would be
if Personalist Theists
tried to be
their brother's keeper
as God
wants them to be.

What a fine place
this world would be
if Fundamentalist Protestants
tried to exemplify
the Sermon on the Mount.

What a fine place
this world would be
if Roman Catholics
tried to keep up
with Saint Francis of Assisi.

Troubadours of Christ

DOROTHY DAY

More than ever am I convinced that the solution lies only in the Gospel and in such a leader as Saint Francis. Peter Maurin has been talking these past two years of recruiting troubadours of Christ. More and more am I convinced that together with our purely material efforts of building up hospices and farming communes we need these fellow travelers with the poor and the dispossessed to share with them their poverty and insecurity and to bring them the reminder of the love of God.

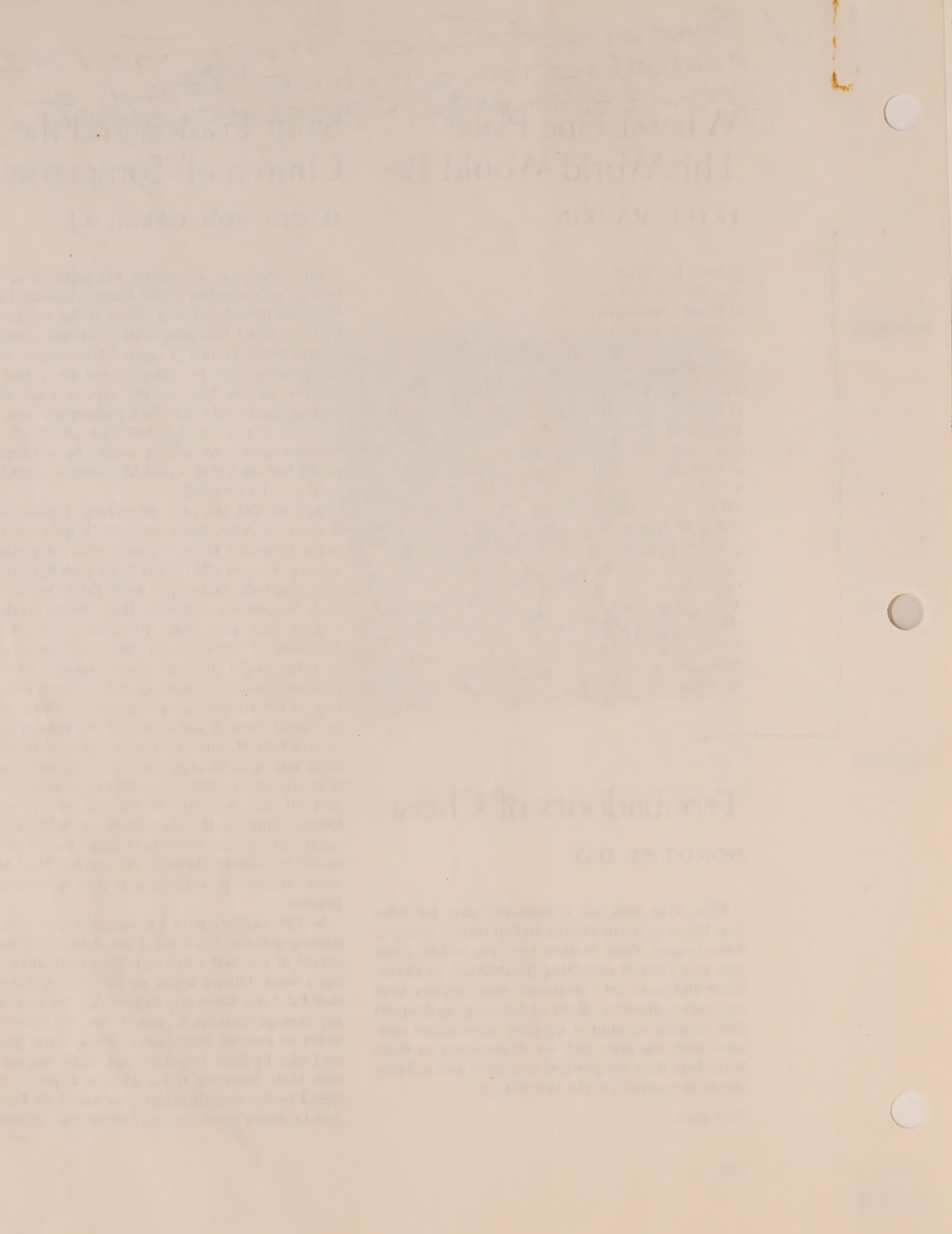
May 1940

MARIO VON GALLI, S.J.

Not long ago a woman journalist who had worked as a reporter at the Second Vatican Council asked me what I was doing at the moment. I told her that I was completely absorbed in writing a book about Francis of Assisi. "Oh, nothing interesting there," was her disappointed reply. She is a Catholic of the "progressive" sort. A book about Francis: that could only be a pious work, one that smacked of the "edification" that people do not welcome today. At best it would be a historical study, but even that would be oriented toward the past, not at all topical.

So how did the idea of writing a book about Francis of Assisi come to me? It grew—as is so often true—out of a series of accidental circumstances. First of all, Dennis Stock's photographs of the Umbrian landscape were there before me, such peerless reproductions they almost make you believe you can hear the clear voice of the Poverello of Assisi. He was the Provençal minstrel of these woods and fields and streams; of these gnarled, tapering olive trees and cypresses and thistles; of these oxen, sheep, and doves. Their voices are heard through the mouth of this man who was so intertwined with his native home that he became one with it—even though he began a worldwide movement that, as he wished, was to encompass all the countries of Europe and even the Orient. This was the place he chose to be the midpoint, the pulsing heart as it were. From it blood would be pumped through the arteries. To it blood would return for revitalization after its wearisome journey.

So the pictures were the occasion and also the starting point of this book. I saw them and they appealed to me. But I had not thought then of writing a book. Others urged me to do it. I protested that I did not know any more about the saint than any average Catholic. I pointed out that there were scores of learned Franciscans (friars, nuns, priests, etc.) who by their vocation were better acquainted with their founding father than I, a Jesuit. I referred to the vast literature that exists on Francis. Just to survey it takes time. But no one listened to



creation and will possess a restraint in exploiting his technological achievements only when his spiritual vision is articulated in mature moral control. Thus the advances of our age have dramatized in bold relief the need for moral excellence. This was the means used by Francis to attain his concord with nature; it is the technique of modern man's attainment of God through the world. This is the modern adaptation of that same balanced discipline that enabled Saint Paul to say:

I know how to live humbly and I know how to live in abundance (I have been schooled in every condition), to be filled and to be hungry, to have an abundance and to suffer want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me [PHIL. 4:12-13].

Thus, to interpret material progress in terms of Christ-centered cosmic development is not only valid but even essential. Only when God preempts in the minds of men the place he deserves, will technology be understood as a means of sharing in the act of creation. The significance of technology in this light would not be in terms of material development alone, but in terms of man's personal orientation to Christ—a conformity that would say to man, "All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 COR. 3:23).

This is also very interesting.

Saint Francis of San Francisco

VACHEL LINDSAY

But the surf is white, down the long strange coast
With breasts that shake with sighs,
And the ocean of all oceans
Holds salt from weary eyes.

Saint Francis comes to his city at night
And stands in the brilliant electric light
And his swans that prophesy night and day
Would soothe his heart that wastes away:
The giant swans of California
That nest on the Golden Gate
And beat through the clouds serenely
And on Saint Francis wait.

But Saint Francis shades his face in his cowl
And stands in the street like a lost gray owl,
He thinks of gold . . . gold.



Francis weeping over the assassination of San Francisco mayor George Moscone in 1978

He sees on far redwoods
Dewfall and dawning:
Deep in Yosemite
Shadows and shrines:
He hears from far valleys
Prayers by young Christians,
He sees their due penance
So cruel, so cold;
He sees them made holy,
White-souled like young aspens
With whimsies and fancies untold:—
The opposite of gold.
And the mighty mountain swans of California
Whose eggs are like mosque domes of Ind,
Cry with curious notes
that their eggs are good for boats
To toss upon the foam and the wind.
He beholds on far rivers
The venturesome lovers
Sailing for the sea
All night
In swanshells white.
He sees them far on the ocean prevailing
In a year and a month and a day of sailing
Leaving the whales and their whoop unfailing
On through the lightning, ice, and confusion
North of the North Pole,
South of the South Pole,
And west of the west of the west,
To the shore of Heartache's Cure,
The opposite of gold,
On and on like Columbus
With faith and eggshell sure.

CONSTITUTION WEEK

By act of Congress and Presidential Proclamation, September 17-23 is Constitution Week. All United States citizens are urged, during this week, to become conversant with the acts and events leading to the formation and adoption of the Constitution of the United States, to reread the Constitution, and to renew their pledge to serve their country, and to stand ever ready to preserve and defend the Constitution. Let us urge all citizens to fly the flag of the United States of America with pride.

-Mrs. John M. Reed and Mrs. Albert J. Allen

*Co-Chairmen for Constitution Week,
Hollywood Chapter, National Society,
Daughters of the American Revolution.*

THE ETERNAL SKY

No matter how our bodies are hemmed in
by city walls, we still can see the sky:
above the factories, the traffic's din,
stars gleam like golden sparks
blown heaven-high.

Or calm as daybreak over country
gardens
dawn comes, and pearly clouds
the rooftops brush.

For God is *here* to one who drops his burdens
in sky's serenity and heaven's hush.

-Jean Hogan Dudley, in *Sharing*



*We can throw stones, complain about them, stumble
over them, or build with them.*

*Every man is like a carpet tack -- he can't go any
farther than his head will let him.*

-Table Talk

A BALANCED DIET

For a hungry person
baker's wheat.
For the famished spirit,
words to eat.

Bread for the body,
poems for the soul.
A balanced diet
makes a person whole.

-Blanche Rene

*If a man lives a decent life and does his work fairly
and squarely so that those dependent on him and attached
to him are better, then he is a success.*

-Theodore Roosevelt



FOOD for THOT

Food for the soul is important too.

CENTURY CITY • LAKEWOOD • WEST COVINA
648 S. Broadway • 515 W. 7th • LA

No. 2145 FFT Every Month 150,000 Readers September 1979

*"We pray our humble service be measured not by gold, but by
the Golden Rule." Suggestions and criticisms appreciated.*

Clifford E. Clinton

LESSONS IN LIVING

September comes and school begins, bringing each
child and young person new teachers, new lessons and
new ways of growing. We watch the boys and girls go
by on their way to school. Perhaps we envy them their
youth and their wonder at all the new knowledge unfolding
before them.

But older folk are still learning, too. Every day we
are presented with new lessons in the school of Life itself.
Our teacher's name? . . . "Experience". Sometimes her
lessons are hard and her tests are anything but easy. Still,
with the learning comes wisdom and a better understanding
of our fellow men. And along the years there are living
lessons of love and joy that make it all worthwhile.

-Esther York Burkholder, Editor

I HAVE FOUR THINGS TO LEARN IN LIFE

- To think clearly without hurry or
confusion;
- To love everybody sincerely;
- To act in everything with the
highest motives;
- To trust in God unhesitatingly.

-Helen Keller

WHO CARES . . .

For three generations, Clifton's has cared what
happens to other people, and because we care, we
have joined together with the Salvation Army in
placing coin receptacles in the front lobby of each
of our cafeterias. Every dollar collected is matched
by a dollar from our company and is forwarded to
the Salvation Army for its use in carrying out its
ministry in 84 countries around the world, and
the combined dollars provide food for the hungry,
shelter for the homeless, clothing for the poor and
medical assistance to the sick.

We solicit your help in this ministry to those
two-thirds of the world's hungry and disadvantaged.

GRADE SCHOOL TEACHER

Within my classroom for these few brief hours,
I see, past eager eyes and each young face,
Untried potential and unchallenged powers
As lives unfold with awkwardness or grace.
Can I, with all my practiced skill and art,
Widen horizons, guide these souls to reach
For nobler dreams, achieve at least in part,
The proud ideals that I try to teach?
Can I, with love, enlarge the boundaries
Of learning, and inspire young hearts to dare
To penetrate all mists and mysteries
In spheres of promise I may never share?
Children, hold steadfast hearts, sing joyous songs;
You are the heirs to whom today belongs.

-Alice Mackenzie Swaim, in *Grit*

*He who has learned an art or science, has wisely laid
up riches against the day of adversity.*

-Robert Louis Stevenson

LIFE'S CHILD

When I was a school boy, I confess
My favorite subject was recess,
And still I do not find it hard
To loiter in my heart's school-
yard
Enraptured by all the things that
are
Such bright adornments of this
star.
I pray I shall not ever be
So grownup that the child in me
Will have no wish to run and play
And sing and dance the hours away.
But may I sometimes in my mind
Leap up and leave my cares behind
And live as if I truly were
Life's child and chief inheritor

-James Dillet Freeman, in *Daily Word*



*A teacher gave her small students an assignment in
which each was to write what qualifications he or she
thought were necessary in order to become a leader. One
small boy wrote:*

*"Before you can be a leader, you have to find a lot of
people dumb enough to follow you."*

-Table Talk

"William, what do you know about Eskimos?" the
teacher asked.

"Not much, teacher," William answered, "except
that I eat their pies."

-Sunshine

A CREED

I believe in boys and girls, the men
and women of a great tomorrow, that
whatsoever the boy soweth, the man shall
reap. I believe in the curse of ignorance,
in the efficacy of schools, in dignity of
teaching, and the joy of serving another.

I believe in wisdom as revealed in
human lives as well as in the pages of a
printed book; in the lessons taught not
so much by precept as by example; in
ability to work with the hands as well
as to think with the head; in everything that makes
life large and lovely.

I believe in beauty in the schoolroom, in the home,
in the daily life, and out-of-doors.

I believe in laughing, in all ideals and distant hopes
that lure us on.

I believe that every hour of every day we receive
a just reward for all we do. I believe in the present
and its opportunities, in the future and its promises,
and in the divine joy of living.

-Edwin Osgood Grover, in *Sunshine*



WORKS OF LOVE

*If I can sprinkle seeds of joy
On someone's barren plot
And bring to light some cause for hope
That he has long forgot;
If I can lighten someone's load
That seems too great to bear,
Assuring him his fellow man
Is not too rushed to care;
If I can help renew one's faith --
Restoring someone's smile,
My life will be enriched to seem
A little more worthwhile.*

-Dorothy Bettencourt Ellstrom

THINK OF IT! Make just one person happy each day
and in 40 years you will have made 14,600 people
happy -- for a little time at least. Who says you
can't be rich!

-The Ambassador

*One reason the school of experience is so tough is that
you get the test first and the lesson later.*

Every great improvement has come after repeated
failures. Virtually nothing comes out right the first
time.

-Charles F. Kettering

helping them to walk the journey. We will become "Shalom-sharers," bringers of peace. But we cannot do it just by doing the act. It is a funny thing, but always contained within the act, must be not only sharing the physical bread, caring for physical needs, but also we must be sharing the source. We cannot become so act-centered that we forget the word. Christianity is always a three-sided message. It is always a triangle. It is always the word, the Kerygma, the Greeks say, service -- the deed -- Diakonia, and community, Koinonia. The word, the act, and the community in which the word and the act take place. The word is always centered within the deed. We do the deed, because we believe the Word. We cannot sever the word from the deed. We cannot merely feed people real bread, because the manna -- no matter how spiritually we feel when we feed it -- can only leave them fed for the moment, and then leaves them unchanged unless we also give them the word. We must also feed the bread of heaven. Only then, will people's lives be turned around. Service is good preparation for the word, but it does not displace it.

The church in later years has been so concerned with the deed, with acts, that it has forgotten the word in which we are centered. The healing and the feeding were signs that there was One there who had power. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life." He was making a statement that was world-shattering at his time. Every time he says, "I am," he is confronting those around him with the very name of God. "I am that whom I am." He shakes those around him with his claim of divinity. Christ is the bread from heaven -- we are not. We can only offer the bread. We must not claim to do in our own names, but only in the name of one who gave himself.

This church has been in a process of renewal. This church has been moving. And I have clearly heard a mandate from this church to become more Word-centered, more centered in the Gospel, more centered in a spiritual core. We ~~had~~ heard it again today in Project Resurrection. And to me that is a very clear sense of direction on the part of this church that we cannot become so deed-centered that we lose our center in the word.

THE MIRACLE FROM WITHIN

We live in a demanding world in which the things that are seen, at times have a way of domineering forces in our lives. One can become so consumed with the physical world and what is actually seen, that the thought of the unseen seems too unreal.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:17,18: For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

With the way contemporary society superintends our lives, sometimes it is difficult to see the unseen due to the constant reality of the physical world in which we exist. But, by using God's word in our Bible and seeing the unseen through our spiritual eye of faith, we can make changes in our lives that without believing in the word of God, we could not successfully make.

The things we usually don't see ~~in our lives~~ are shaped by the word. Even when our desires lead us to try and touch our human imagination, if it's not the righteousness of Holy Spirit, it becomes an object of temporary fulfillment, thus it leads one back to a new beginning where God wants us when we stray. It's those times that our maker gently reaches out and picks the yielding spirit up and turns it back on course.

Lamentations 3:25: The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Isaiah 25:1 O Lord, you are my God; I will exult your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago.

Even though we don't see the unseen, if we read God's word and manifest it, soon we become aware of the power it produces in our lives to make positive changes in the seen. Remember in the beginning when God said,

"Let there be light," and there was light. God spoke the word light and as a result, the thing that was not came into existence. Then, all of creation was developed from a nothingness into existence. There is a powerful message right there in our creators actions that shows me that asking God for answers by way of faith is the very foundation to which we were created; the spoken action, the action of faith and belief that becomes real when nurtured. Just as God brought about what was not, we can bring about what is not by belief that the works of the Holy Spirit guide us to righteous actions. One must totally surrender control of all situations to God's care. That's the hard part thanks to our imperfect nature.

With the way contemporary society is structured, sometimes it's hard to take time to explore the depths of the unseen because of the demands of this physical world. ^{with} God's word and seeing the unspoken through our eyes of faith, we can make changes in our lives that without first hearing the words of scripture we could not make.

The things that we usually don't see in our lives are shaped by allowing God's intervention. For example:

Luke 8:14,15 Jesus said, "The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by perseverance produce a crop."

2 Corinthians 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should give what they have decided in their heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Romans 8:18-21 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from

its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love God, who have been called according to God's purpose.

Even though we don't see the unseen, if we study God's word and manifest it, soon we become aware of the power it produces to make positive changes in our lives. At what point does the manifestation of the word work and when? You've probably heard ~~the old adage~~, "There's a time and a place for everything" or "God will handle a situation when God is ready."

There is a certain amount of truth to both ~~adages~~, but if we as Christians don't take the responsibility to educate ourselves in the word and to seek the presence of the Holy Spirit through prayer, we can't truly be growing in our spiritual life. Perhaps some people are satisfied with an occasional or frequent Sunday church service. I used to be content with just a little of time spent in worship. I knew that I believed in and loved Jesus and that was all I needed to get to Heaven. Something was still missing.

As I became involved with personal bible study and prayer time on a gradually frequent level, I realized that with the passing of time that if I settled for mere existence among this physical world, that I would always long for true happiness. Thanks to God speaking to me through a chosen one and very special friend, I started looking for more. I found out just how important personal devotional time is. It's also great to be among other Christians, but unless we all find God in solitude, we don't always find a crucial union with a feeling only found when sought.

In that private time, wherever that may be, we establish roots of faith. With this faith comes an overwhelming abundance of peace. If all worldly addictions could be substituted for this peace I speak of, we

would already be in Heaven. So why not? Imagine living every day as if you were already there. With belief comes faith.

Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Hebrew 11:1 Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

We can't survive in this world without God's love, nor can we without our faith actually be filled with Heaven's promise of hope, peace, and love everlasting. It's as if problems (obstacles of faith) , are red flags from God intended to remind us to stay tuned to our spiritual selves and wait with no doubt to bask in the wisdom of God's glory. Take the time, make it every moment, allow the miracle to take place within you.

God Will Bless You With Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alan".

It's good to know what it is to fail

By Laurence McMillin
Special to The Christian Science Monitor

Claremont, Calif.

● "You're in a risky position, Peter. You've never known what it is to fail."

College counselor Bill Ripley was talking to a high school valedictorian years ago who took heed of the warning and has, since, received his bachelor's degree from Harvard and entered graduate school.

● "You will never become a champion until you learn how to fail," says diving great Pat McCormick, recipient of four Olympic Gold Medals, to her students.

● "If you've never failed, you haven't set your goals high enough; you've never really tested your potential," states Joe C. Hearn, founder of a company called the Motivation Corporation. And he asserts: "Fear of failure is the reason people don't establish goals."

● A prestigious New England preparatory school became several million dollars stronger because a student who once was expelled wanted to thank the institution in later life for having given him the "kick in the pants" he had needed to turn his life around.

● "You'll never amount to anything, Einstein," a Latin teacher once told a slow student who rebelled against rote learning. Two relativity theories later, he would tell associates that "the stiff-necked stubbornness of a mule" was his only special gift.

● Winston Churchill, who recalled spending three years in the same grade, managed to learn so thoroughly there how to write that "noble thing" an English sentence that he received the Nobel Prize for Literature.

● Thomas Edison said to his son Charles as they watched the material achievement of the inventor's career go up in flames:

"You can make capital out of disaster."

He told Charles Edison, who later became governor of New Jersey, that they would rebuild the entire electric works and laboratories better than before, profiting by the mistakes they had made the first time.

Lifeline

"Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel,
"My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is
disregarded by my God"?
Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends
of the earth.
God does not faint or grow weary; God's understanding is
unsearchable.
God gives power to the faint, and strengthens the
powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will
fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their
strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40, verses 27
through 31)

The 31st verse offers the promise of renewed
strength for those who wait for the Lord. Wait how?
Wait for what? How will we be strengthened by waiting?
An examination of what life was like and what was going
on in the time and place that these writings are about
should provide some answers.

In the sixth century B. C. the people of Israel were
suffering from spiritual fatigue. The Babylonian army
had crushed Jerusalem. The Temple had been destroyed,
as well as the dynasty of David, the cherished symbols
of Jewish life and their faith. These people lost their
political independence, and their leaders and
craftpersons were in Babylonian exile. Many of those in
exile became despondent over their tragedy and sadness.
The Israelites allowed their faith to become eroded.
They felt that God no longer cared for them.

These people indeed had something to wait for.
Verses 9 through 11 of this 40th chapter of Isaiah read:
Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good
tidings;

lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord God comes with might, and God's arm rules for God; God's reward is with God, and God's recompense before God. God will feed God's flock like a shepherd; God will gather the lambs in God's arms, and carry them in God's bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Wait how? As couch potatoes wait for the arrival of the Duracell bunny, anxious to find out if there is a new "pseudosponsor" to encounter the marauding hare thumping and beating it's way through the latest "hypus videus"? I certainly do not think that we are to wait so passively. The book of Isaiah was written in Hebrew. The Hebrew language has a number of words which can be translated into the English word wait, some of these Hebrew words mean to wait passively as in, to remain or to defer, and some refer to waiting actively. In the original manuscript, the passage, "But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength", KOH VEH' is used. This Hebrew word KOH VEH' can be translated as wait or hope, and it means to wait or hope with expectation, as if one was looking forward to something with intense anticipation, tension, and endurance.

For Isaiah, waiting meant not looking to current events with concerns about what will happen next. Instead waiting meant actively anticipating God's promise to come with might and a ruling arm and bring a reward and recompense. The waiting that indeed paid off. The Israelites were liberated, they had an enthusiastic upsurge, and were able to rapidly prepare for their start home.

What kind of waiting are we doing in the nineties? Are we trusting in God or are we mulling over current events? Do you want to look at recession problems such as "will I get a job before my unemployment runs out" or, if you have a job, "will the company that employs me have a lay-off due to decreases in their profits", or do you

chose to put your trust in God? Listen to George Bush's version of how things are going and you will be asking, "What next?" Listen to the words of Christ as found in Luke 12 : 35 through 40 "Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour." It seems that this teaching would induce one to say, "So what; what next."

Wait how? In 1st Peter 5 : 6 through 11 we are told: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that God may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on God, because God cares for you. Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring Lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist Satan, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To God be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Wait with alertness. Wait vigilantly.

Is this waiting done with anxiety? - with some of those thoughts that are the manifestations of the desire to meddle in something. Too bad. The "when" and the "how" are God's business. The very first verse that I quoted, Isaiah 40:27, offers a Hebrew word that can be translated into different English words. This time let's keep it simple. The NRSV uses right where the KJV uses judgement. In the KJV we find: My way is hid from the

Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?, and the NRSV reads: My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God,... In other words: If we think that we have some right to judge what things should happen or how they should happen, God will ignore us. All that we will be accomplishing will be the damage that anxiety brings.

Let's go back just a moment to that phrase in Luke: "Cast all your anxiety on God." Would you decline an invitation like this? What do we have more of than White House-hot air? Anxiety. Short prayers work quite nicely. Let me suggest one. I pray that you take my anxiety God. Once your anxiety is gone won't you have more presence of mind to wait vigilantly?

Wait for what? For God himself to restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.

Wait for what? For the coming of the Son of Man.

How will we be strengthened? "Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength." The original Hebrew can be translated with the word exchange as well as the word renew. Exchange weakness for God's unfailing strength. As in: exchanging anxious thoughts and worries for having God on your mind, in the forefront or on the sidelines of your mind when concentrations upon secular tasks become necessary. Think of it this way: Dump the anxieties, exchange the use of this mental capacity to loving God with all of your mind. Dump your anxieties on God.

Wait vigilantly.

To wind or twist is the basic meaning of to wait. From this the noun rope is derived. Therefore, one may think that to wait for the Lord means to let God become your lifeline or think of God as one's cord of escape. Trust in God not in what is going on around you. God wants to be your lifeline. God wants to be your cord of escape from anxieties. Anxieties are awesomely destructive forces. Exchange them. Escape them. Reach out and grab the rope. If you were drowning, wouldn't

you grab a lifeline if it were thrown to you? Aren't some of us drowning in the nineties, or, if not, don't you suffer at least a little bit seeing others drowning.

Seeing the plight of the homeless of our society, as an example of current events, does not offer any indications of what is in store for us. But this does not mean that we are to ignore the people of this plight.

Wait actively. Reach out that other hand, God will cut you some slack, extend the rope to someone less fortunate than yourself, and feel some of your renewed strength.

How will we be strengthened? Mount up with wings like eagles, run and do not be weary, walk without being faint. If this sounds like starting high and running fast only to come to a walking pace, it isn't. It is simply something for everyone. God's army has it's front-runners and leaders, but most of the work is done by the foot soldiers.

Wait actively. Wait for what God has for you.

Mount up means to put forth or lift up. Reach out and grab your lifeline. Put forth your wings. Try them out.

